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To Mr. H. S. Wellcome

with kind regards

from the author.

Andrew Balfour,



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TO ARMS!

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

BY STROKE OF SWORD

VENGEANCE IS MINE



"LET ME PRESENT TO YOU 'MISTRESS WAYWARD'"

TO ARMS!

BEING SOME PASSAGES FROM THE EARLY
LIFE OF ALLAN OLIPHANT, CHIRURGEON,
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF, NOW SET FORTH
FOR THE FIRST TIME BY ANDREW BAL-
FOUR, AUTHOR OF "BY STROKE OF
SWORD," AND ILLUSTRATED BY CECIL
W. QUINNELL

CHEAPER EDITION

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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER

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TO ARMS!



CHAPTER I

BY SIDE OF TWEED

TWEEDSIDE! bonnie Tweedside and fair river Tweed! I do not doubt that some day a sweet singer shall arise to sound your praises far and wide, and tell of the beauties of your winding course, but that day has not yet come.

I do indeed purpose, God willing, to make some mention of you in this my tale, but I shall write in sober prose and dally not overlong by your quiet banks. And yet, my river, there are few like to you. I have seen old Father Thames, ship-laden and bridge-bespanded, rolling on his stately way; I have stood beside Seine's greenish waters, as they curve from wall to wall of Paris; I have gazed on hoary Tiber's yellow flood in the valley of the seven hills, but I place Tweed before them all. And even in mine own wild land there are none to equal the river of the south country. Tay may be statelier, Forth more varied, Spey mightier in rush and roar, and Clyde may boast its falls, but to me 'tis all in vain.

Tweed was my first love, and shall be my last; and so it is that, as my hair silvers and my shoulders bend, I have come back to lay my bones within sound of the waters I have loved to watch and whip and wrestle with in days gone by. Right well do I know the old river of the border-land from source to mouth, from the tiny rill far off upon the lone moor to the great sweep of current which glides past the

red-tiled Berwick houses to the sea. I have seen the May flies floating lightly on the narrow stream at Broughton, I have watched the shallows splashing under the brig o' Peebles, I have fished the deep, still pools where the noisy Leithen is swallowed up and vanishes, and I have watched the great yellow trout rise heavily to the fly under shadow of the Eildons. Ay, and still farther to the east and south, past Kelso, Coldstream, and Norham's pile, have I traced the clear waters, as foaming rapids, curling eddies, broad and sluggish reaches, and tiny cascades, till I have felt the salt sea-breeze on my face, and seen the last curve, the last tributary burn, and the last bridge whose piers are washed by the swirling, ever restless river.

But, as I have said, this tale of mine has little to do with Tweed, save, indeed, at the beginning; for it was within sound of its murmurings that I first drew breath and opened eye. Not only so, but it was near its fairest part, at least in my opinion, for the river at St. Drynans village is very broad and pleasant to the sight, running from the flat valley land below Melrose town to the low wood-covered mound and hills where nestles the old abbey, and where the red sandstone peeps out upon its farther bank; and then onwards in the cool shade, at the base of the great cliffs which rise from the water's edge, scarred and broken and crowned by tree and bush. Here is many a fine pot hole and curl of the current behind stone and boulder, where, head to stream, the broad-backed fish lie waiting for their prey with gently wagging tails and breast-fins faintly moving. And so, from shadow into sunlight, the river flows where the broad green fields stretch away on either side, and beech and elm hide the banks where in the springtime the primrose peeps with yellow eye, crouching low to miss the cold wind from the east.

But though I am carried away by this river of Tweed, I fear I get no further on the ink stream of my tale, and so I must back to St. Drynans, where now I write to the slow ticking of the old clock, whose round and figured face has stared so many years from out its corner. I have plenty of leisure now when it is past the time to throw a fly or thread a worm; but that is not my sole reason for sitting down to tell what befell in the days of my youth.

Nay, rather, it is what has happened in these latter days that has set my fingers itching, and made my brain busy with memories of those long dead. We have seen what I take to be the last struggle of the house of Stuart, and the land has scarce ceased to wonder or to mourn o'er the march to Derby, the slow retreat, and the last dark days on the moor of Culloden and amongst the Highland passes. Not that I have been troubled overmuch. I have held aloof, deeming the matter an act of folly, and indeed having little of sympathy with the unhappy prince; but what has come to pass has stirred me and brought to my mind thoughts of another rising, less well planned, less brilliant, and as unfortunate. It is because the days of 1715 run some danger of being forgotten that I have set me to my task, for my thread of life became, for good or for ill, strangely interwoven with the events of that rash, half-hearted effort of the prince's father to win back his own.

Did I indeed rely solely for interest on the tale of Sheriffmuir I had never made beginning, but, haply for my writing, very curious, and without doubt somewhat marvellous mischances and adventurings fell to my lot, such as are not common to all men, and it seems to me well worth the telling. And yet I know full well that very much lies in the manner of recounting such mishaps, and having had more to do with potions than pens I approach my task with some diffidence. 'Tis true I have written a play which I may say without boast has had a very fair run in the play-house at Edinburgh, but this is a matter of very different import; for it is one thing to write of folks' imaginings, and quite another to tell of fact. Moreover, there seems to me a difficulty in speaking of one's own doings and deeds of arms; for on the one hand there is the error of commission, on the other that of omission, as the Shorter Catechism hath it; and though one would not willingly boast, yet truth will out in a plain tale, and brainless folk are ever ready to find fault.

Howbeit, as I fear some may find fault with me already for having let myself be swept into this side eddy of reason and explanation, I will, without more ado, start out upon my course.

The house of Oliphant is a great one in the border-land,

and though perchance it has not played so famous a part in times long past as that of Douglas, yet it has ever borne itself with honour on many a stricken field, and the men thereof have ever been weighty in council and gifted with much shrewdness and discernment. For all that, these good qualities have gone but a little way in making it great as to this world's gear, and "poor and proud" is a motto befitting it very well, as indeed it suits many another Scottish family of renown.

And still more was it applicable to that branch of the ancient stock of which I, Allan Oliphant, am a scion, for we could boast of little more than a keep, a courtyard, a byre and barn, and some few acres of very poor soil, and some dozen of very stout adherents.

Now this had ever been a source of grief to my father, who to my mind dwelt overmuch on such matters, and did his best to render himself the poorer and the more disliked by entering into divers lawsuits with his neighbours concerning a few roods here and a half-acre there. Indeed, when first I can remember aught about him, he was wont to spend half his time away from Erkinholme, being busy over deeds and writs at the Parliament House in Edinburgh, and leaving my mother to scrape and save with anxious face and troubled mien; for as time went on there were many to feed and clothe, and if there was lack of money at Erkinholme, there was assuredly no lack of children.

Of these I was the eldest, and took after my mother, who was a Cameron from the west, and from her I got my breadth and height; for my father was a man of small stature, though exceeding wiry and tough as wall ivy. He was of a studious habit, much given to the working of calculations and dabbling in chemistry, whereby he was wont to produce at times most horrid odours from the room in which he worked, and which no one was allowed to enter. All this, I doubt not, had helped to make him thin and sallow, and stained his hands and nails, and taken from him what love he once had for sport and pastime. Yet, as I have shown, he had the dour, fighting spirit in him, though it had taken a strange form and one far from profitable. As to appearance, like most Oliphants he was dark, and, whether from principle or convenience, kept his hair very close cropped,

while he went clean shaven, though the root-growth caused a purplish haze upon cheeks and chin. Moreover, being near-sighted, he had a way of peering at one curiously from under his lids; but his glance was very keen, and he was said to have a great knowledge of men and their ways. His nose was long and drooping, and his mouth also drooped somewhat dismally at the corners; but for all that he had an air of fine distinction, which became him well and marked him as a man of birth and breeding. He did his best to counteract this, however, in his manner of dressing, for his clothes were ever ill-fitting and his hat awry, and he had a curious trick of donning one part of a suit with parts of another, having no regard to shape or colouring. A sad life I fear my mother had with him at first, but when I was of an age to understand such matters she had taken to laughing at him and his strange ways, having indeed quite enough over which to worry without troubling herself as to whether or no her goodman had a stain on his sleeve or a shoe unlaced. Yet she was ever careful of his comfort, and though they held divers opinions on many matters, yet the memory of past times kept them in good accord for the most part. Sometimes, howbeit, I was wont to marvel what it was had made Meg Cameron my father's wife, for she was no common woman in face and figure, and could not have been lightly won. I have heard it said they met far back in the killing times, when he took neither one side nor the other, while she, like most of her kinsfolk in the west, stood by the Covenant and was a very pretty Whig, and, what is more, a very stout one. I was told also by old Mat Kerr the servitor, that my father had perilled his life and lands in giving timely warning to a conventicle, and this solely to win a friendly glance from Meg Cameron's blue eyes. Indeed the old man had a very fine tale of a night ride over moorland and peat bog, a clever cheating of dragoons, and a greeting of musket balls from the blue-bonnets; but as it is the story of Allan Oliphant I purpose telling, and not that of John his father, I must write no more on this matter. Suffice to say that the owner of the blue eyes was herself won in time, and some seven years after the Revolution the old house at St. Drynans witnessed a wedding, and a year thereafter a baptism—to wit, that of myself.

I was the eldest, and that by a good space of years, for I could run upon a sturdy pair of legs and knew every man and beast about the place ere my brother David appeared at Erkinholme. But after him they came thick and fast, both boys and girls, of whom some lived and are yet living, though most have found a resting-place by land or sea.

By virtue of that lapse of time I had little in common with the others, and grew up concerned mostly with my own thoughts and imaginings, and found companions in the village lads, so that between us we played some mischief in the countryside. And yet, despite our pranks and caprices, I look back with pleasure on those days, and deem them as having been of profit to me; for it was then I got what knowledge I have of birds and their ways, and learned to discern the tap of the wily woodpecker, the antics of the merry tit, and the whistle and song and cry of every feathered beauty in the vale of Tweed. Moreover, no squirrel could hide his storehouse from me, nor badger his burrow, while even the red fox with all his cunning fell into my trap, as I can well remember. Again, does one regret the days he learned to know the otter and his tricks, or those in which, under the mossy bank, he guddled his first great trout, tickling it ever so gently from tail to gills? Ah me! we were a merry band, when wiseacres and mighty statesmen were binding two countries into one and changing all things.

And if I trained my ear and eye and got my love of Dame Nature, I also strengthened my thews and sinews in many a brisk game upon the green which stretched from the fields about the old kirk to where the gorse clustered in golden masses and the scent of the wild thyme filled the air. Foremost amongst all these games was that of the football, wherein two bodies of boys face one another and make play with a convenient bladder, each striving to cross a line marked out on either side by coats and hats and neckcloths.

Now there is a fashion of carrying on this sport in strict accordance with the name, but such was not our method; for, having hands as well as feet, we made use of both, thereby as I think adding interest to the game and greater strength to our bodies. For even yet, old man as I am, I can think

with a very lively pleasure on the joy of a wild run round and through a host of adversaries, leaping over one, pushing another aside, and perchance carrying a third upon your back across the coveted line.

Again it is very comforting to bring an opponent down when in full career, either by deftly taking him below the knees, which is the surer plan, or round the neck or body ; though in this case, if he be the heavier, you are apt to gain but little honour and come to a sad fall for your pains. Moreover, there is the joy of battle in the mad rush from end to end, all in a hot and struggling mass, shouting with eagerness, driving at the ball, and caring not a whit for blows and bruises. A right manly sport it is, but though I would fain linger over these early days I may not do so, having weightier matters of which to tell ; only this I will say, that such an upbringing tended to lessen pride and temper—and there was much need of this in my case—and to foster courage and self-reliance. And so in the winter season it is now my custom to smoke a pipe on the green and set the lads to work upon the good game, and cheer the victors and listen to the sad tales of the vanquished ; and indeed once I, old Doctor Oliphant, doffed my coat and went at it with the best of them ; but this was upon a very especial occasion, and before I was taken with the rheumatism in the knees.

This same pain and stiffness came from wading knee and sometimes thigh-deep to reach likely parts when fishing, for in my middle age I have kept to this other sport of my youth. But this manner of fishing I took up later, often with another as companion, and of him I must now make mention, as his coming was of very great importance to me in many ways, as I shall show. It is very likely he had never come at all if by some curious mischance, when I had reached my sixteenth year, one of my father's many lawsuits had not ended in his favour and made him the richer by some ninety pounds English. Thereupon he came home swearing very heartily, as was his way when pleased, and seeing me in the doorway with my mother he vowed I had grown out of all knowledge, using the phrase, as he told us, in two senses, having reference both to bodily increase and mental decrease. A few days thereafter he astounded me by the information that he intended getting me a tutor under whom I should

study as befitted my rank and station, and again departed townwards, leaving me in a very dubious frame of mind and my mother much perturbed at what she considered sinful folly. And yet, when I come to think upon it, my father was in the right, and I owe nearly all I cherish to this sudden freak which brought Henry Gering to Erkinholme. It was no doubt all very well to spend two hours of the evening with the old minister, but when one hour was spent in his going to sleep and the other in his waking up I benefited little from his learning and discourse, the latter indeed consisting chiefly of heavy snores. As a result it was a very ignorant youth who met the learned bachelor of Cambridge, as the latter one fine day in April rode into the courtyard on a steed some two sizes overshoot for his long legs. His first appearance did not go far to inspire reverence in his pupil. He was an extremely tall and ungainly man, with a gaunt, spare figure, and narrow, sloping shoulders. His hair fell straight and bristling upon his neck, and his clean-shaven face was one of the most curious I have seen in man. With his weak eyes, ill-shaped nose, and long mouth, from which his clipped English accent sounded strangely, he looked the last person fitted to have charge of a wild lad in his teens. He was dressed in very sombre hues, and wore a great broad-brimmed hat which might have suited one of Cromwell's pastors. His breeches were shabby and frayed at the knees, and his hosen being purple in colour formed a curious contrast to his black cloth. As I have said, he was too big for his horse, a sorry, shaggy beast, and his long, thin feet would have touched the ground had he let them hang free from the stirrups. At first sight of him I clapped hands to sides, and even in the presence of my father was about to give vent to my mirth, when the stranger saw me and nodded and smiled. It may seem strange to those who knew him not, but that rare smile transformed Henry Gering's plain face as a ray of sunlight changes a bleak moorland on a day of lowering cloud and gathering rain. What is more, it put an end to my laughter and was the beginning of a friendship, broken, no doubt, and for a time despised by one of us, but firm and steadfast at the bitter end. I cannot say wherein lay its charm, but the mournful, half-feeble look vanished before it, and one

saw the hidden honesty and strength which lay behind so curious a mask. His dismounting was more easy than graceful, as was his bow to my mother, who, I grieve to say, received him in somewhat chilling fashion. Indeed her chief thought, as I found thereafter, was that such a long, thin body would take a terrible amount of provender to fill it, and would more than fill any bed in Erkinholme. It did not take Henry Gering, however, more than a week to make her a staunch ally, and indeed before a month was out he was prime favourite with all of us, excepting, indeed, my father, who, as I have said, was a strange man and did not bestow his affections lightly, or, if he did, took precious care to keep the fact well concealed. My tutor's greeting of his pupil seemed to me at the time most fitting, though I have often thought since that his manner was a trifle old for his years, as he numbered but some three and twenty winters when first I met him. He very reverently laid his huge, bony hand on my head, and delivered himself of a sentence which I took to be Latin, but found thereafter was Greek, the latter being ever his favourite. He then shook me by the hand very solemnly, and I remember thinking how soft his fingers were despite their thinness. It was, however, their loose jointing which gave them this feeling, for, like all the rest of his big skeleton, his finger bones were loosely hung together, and as a consequence his knuckles were very large and prominent. To our surprise a small valise held all his belongings, and these were mostly books, so that out of very pity my good mother set to work to make him underlinen, and his gratitude for the same was ludicrous; but such was ever his way, thankful for the veriest trifle and nearly in tears at a kindness. At the first I was inclined somewhat to despise him, for I soon found that he had been more or less of a bookworm all his days, and his talk ran on his university life, and in especial of various doings at Emmanuel College, where he had been a scholar. It seemed to me that these students must have been a very grave and learned company, but later experience has served to alter this view, for I have met several of this very college who in nowise confirmed my early ideas.

Howbeit, in course of time my feelings towards him underwent a change, for if his coming revealed to me many things

of which I had before been ignorant, it also served to enlighten him on many points. As far as I could gather, he had never been a boy, that is, he had been busy over books and parchments from his infancy, and I confess I was a sore puzzle to him. He did not know what to make of my restlessness and waywardness, and as for our wild games and pranks, they filled him with a holy horror till he got used to them.

Moreover, I found he had been born and bred in a very flat country, with many ditches and much monotony of scenery, and as since those days I have been in the Netherlands, I can well conceive his wonder at the beauties about him. I very soon had him versed in the ways of birds and beasts, and I laugh even yet when I think of how he sweated and toiled in great good humour as he tried to scale a tall, smooth elm for a crow's nest, and I can well recall his face of misery when an addled egg gave way within his mouth.

It may seem strange that so young a man should have known so little of the pleasures of youth,—not that the tasting of a foul egg is one of them,—but it must be remembered that he was the only one of his family, and, save when at Cambridge, had lived solely with an aged mother, who had been his chief care, as he had been her comfort. She, good woman, had gone the way of all flesh, and left him very poor and very mournful. By great good fortune, as he had thought, he had become secretary to a gentleman at ten pounds a year; but his master died of the small-pox in Edinburgh, and he was like to have starved had my father not found him in the court to which he had been haled as a vagabond. John Oliphant, being, as I have said, a man of discernment, and, as I think I have not said, one far from wasteful in most matters, talked very fairly with him, and finally engaged him at twelve pounds a year as tutor to his son, and brought him home in some glee; for, as I heard him tell my mother, the fool of an Englishman had not even bargained as to salmon thrice a week.

This thought, however, calls to my mind that Henry Gering had one recreation, for he was a lover of the gentle art; but I found that it was a very gentle form of that art he had pursued. Indeed I have never seen great sport in

sitting by a still stream, book in one hand and rod in the other, waiting for fat and stupid fish to hook themselves, and be drawn ashore without fight or show of courage. I should dearly love to tell of the first trout he caught in Tweed, by what he was pleased to call "the new method"; but though he nearly drowned himself in the landing of it, and gave me a half-holiday in sheer joy, the fish itself weighed but a half-pound and was ill fed. Moreover, I find I have made little way in my tale, despite my worthy resolves, and so will pass on without more ado to more important matters.

CHAPTER II

THE MAID FROM THE SOUTH

THE mansion house of Erkinholme, if it could not boast of a noble appearance and many rooms, had beyond doubt a noble site and was the abode of much comfort and kindness. The old keep, grey and weather-beaten, which had seen many a band of hardy moss-troopers come and go and witnessed English armies sweeping northwards or flying south, formed one end of the house as I knew it, the part within the courtyard, and behind which lay stables and outhouses. It had been greatly added to, however, chiefly by my father, and a strong square building reached out from it into a garden, which to me was a paradise. Therein grew half a hundred grosset bushes, bearing most luscious fruit, both green and red, and more especially a berry famed in all St. Drynans, a mixture of the twain, being a greenish yellow with ruddy stripes and excellently juicy and well flavoured. Moreover, our apple trees were unsurpassed, and there was an abundance of currants and of wall fruit; and when on a fine summer's day the river's murmuring came faintly to one's ears, and the honey bees were flitting on wings of gossamer from sweet pea to snapdragon, I desired nought better than to lie very drowsily in the shade and dream the dreams of youth. But indeed, at all seasons, that garden was well worth the seeing, for even in the winter the holly trees with their crimson spotting made a very fair show of colour against snow or hoar frost. I have set all this down in order to tell how it was that Henry Gering enticed me to my work, for if before breakfast I did two good hours at construing or learning by rote some English poet, I was at liberty to walk with him and talk on divers matters after the meal which we had at seven by the clock, and which was

our greatest in the day. I soon learned to look forward to this as a treat not to be lightly foregone, for my tutor, though he conversed with gravity, did so with wisdom and in a way most interesting, and he had many views on many subjects.

"A very hearty morning to you, Allan," he was wont to say; "to-day we shall further consider the philosophy of Plato."

At another time it would be the Commonwealth, the memory of which, in some queer manner, he managed to both love and hate. I learned much from him in this way, but what I chiefly cared to discuss with him was the then recent Treaty of Union.

He had by good luck witnessed the wild and stormy scene in the Scottish capital when the two countries were made one as far as state craft could so make them, and though he regarded the treaty as very fit and proper, I used to thrill with a wild joy when he recounted how Belhaven, Fletcher, and Lockhart had pleaded and thundered against the hated measure, and how the furious mob had wrecked the heavy waggons which had borne English gold to the castle, and had hurled volleys of stones at the hapless drivers. Indeed he had been scared by the folk of Edinburgh, who he told me were the keenest witted and the most passionate people he had known. As for me, I knew not what to think of all that had passed. My father, whose judgment and foresight I greatly honoured, was for the Union heart and soul; my mother, with whom I was more in sympathy, reviled it openly; and so at one time I lauded it to the skies, at another I had no words too hard for it, and all this much to the amusement of my good tutor, who could not conceive a lad having such interest in politics and matters of State.

It seems to me, however, that we in Scotland grow older much more speedily than they do in the south, and the love of argument is bred in us ere we don breeks and can handle our horn spoons. For all my doubts I can see now, as indeed my whole course of action has proved, that Henry Gering's arguments convinced me, for he showed me very clearly that such was the feeling betwixt the two countries that another year would have seen war; and that not

of Jacobites against those who favoured the accession of the house of Hanover, but of the Scottish nation against England. I willingly allow that it has taken long, and will take longer ere the true benefit of this great act is seen, and that it has brought many evils in its train; but, having travelled and been to some extent behind the scenes, I thank God that I was so influenced in my youth as to take a proper view of these weighty matters.

All this, however, is but by the way, and I must hie me back to Erkinholme in the old days, and my manner of study. I was kept hard at my tasks, for Henry Gering earned his stipend well; and if at times I rebelled, yet I satisfied him upon the whole, albeit he was no easy man to please, being very strict in his way, and a mighty stickler for obedience. All the same, if he was my master in the hours of work, I very soon became his in those of play and recreation, and made his life a burden to him at times; for he was a trifle short in the wind, and did not always relish a mad scamper or a bout with quarter staves. He had to put up with it, nevertheless, for so my father ordered, as he was somewhat shocked to find that my worthy tutor could not handle a sword, and knew but little of these arts and graces which are befitting in a gentleman. Indeed he was at no small pains to teach Henry Gering how to fence and ride, and did not cease till he was sure that the poor man could never learn the first nor enjoy the second. Being satisfied, however, upon these points, he left him to his own devices after rating him very soundly, which scolding the scholar took meekly and with thankfulness, and when my mother condoled with him, merely smiled gravely and said the pen was greater than the sword, and that men had been given legs, citing Adam's case the while. Thereupon, as is the way with women, Dame Oliphant scolded him for want of spirit, and also left him to himself, which, being what he wanted, pleased him very well.

My father took also another notion in his head, which was of more moment, for he laid it down as a rule that I should learn to speak and write in good English; and this I found a hard thing, and looked upon as strange. John Oliphant himself was none too particular, and my mother spoke as they do in the west country; while I, as was but

natural, had hitherto talked in the broad Scots, which came so readily to my tongue and sounded so homely to my ears. It seemed to me folly at the time to change all this, but I have since found the wisdom of it, for it has put me at my ease with persons of distinction, whom it was fated I should meet, and saved me from ridicule at times, while now I find it of great avail in the writing of these memoirs. Still let it not be thought I gave up my mother tongue, and have ceased to use it upon occasion ; for, as we say, I lippen to the harsh speech of the cold north, and have found it a comfort and a solace in queer places and at odd times.

Perchance also it has proved of greater service to me than the other, but as I hope to shew how and when in this my history, I will say nought more concerning it at the present.

In all other ways our life at Erkinholme went on very much as it had done, only as children came retainers went, till only old Mat Kerr and two serving-maids were left us ; but the former was a host in himself. He had come with my mother from Galloway, where he had been a great upholder of the Covenant and counted as one of its stoutest defenders. He was a grim old man, very full of texts and at times of strong waters, but he could tell a tale with the best, and retained much of his youthful fire and courage. He would never have served under John Oliphant but for the ride of which I have spoken, and this had won his heart, though at the time he had come very near running his future master through the body.

He had sole charge of the secret room in which my father worked when at home, and in which, as I now know, he hoped to discover the nature of certain gems and the method of making them, and many a time Mat Kerr's strong arm has sent me spinning down the passage when I strove to enter and explore the mysteries.

I can see him yet in his clothes of hodden grey, with his plaid and broad bonnet, a Bible in one pocket and a case full of bullets in another, about each of which he had a wondrous story, for half of them had made him their billet.

Beyond a doubt he had seen and suffered much, for he was one of the many taken at Bothwell Brig and one of the few who had won clear from the kirkyard of Greyfriars.

There was an old seat of stone, stained and lichen spotted, which jutted out, in a sunny corner, from the courtyard wall, and many a time and oft have I listened to the old man as he sat thereon. I loved to see the wild war-gleam come into his watery and faded eyes as he told of fierce skirmishes with the dragoons, and it was worth while watching his shaggy and snow-white eyebrows draw together in a frown, as he recounted some cruel killing on the bleak hillside, a murder with, for accompaniments, the wailing of fatherless bairns and the curses of a new-made widow. And every now and then he would rise heavily and straighten his bowed back, and send me for the two crossed broadswords which hung above his bed-head; and till the breath went from him he would show me some of his half-forgotten cuts and thrusts, and follow the lesson by setting forth the history of every scratch and notch and stain upon the heavier of the two blades, which had been his own.

He was one of the last of an old race, a very stiff-necked but noble generation, and I remember full well I used to marvel at his age, and wrinkles, and withered skin; and now—ah now! for so the world wags—I am as he was in many ways, and the lads wonder at the old doctor's musty tales and dwellings on the past. Truly, *tempus fugit* is a very true saying, and one not to be lightly thought upon.

Such, then, were my teachers, with in addition my mother, whose precepts were much like those of her ancient henchman, though framed more gently.

"Laddie, laddie," she was wont to say, "it matters little what ye be, as lang as ye scorn a lie, live cleanly, and aye mind that parritch is the best o' fare," and as an afterthought she would add, thinking no doubt of my father and his doings, "ay, and dinna meddle wi' ither folks' ongauns." And here I will say that this is an excellent advice, but a trifle hard to act upon, at least in its latter part.

And now I will pass on to the first of those events which had to do with the part I was to play in life, and which was neither more nor less than the advent of another stranger, but one as unlike the first as it was possible to imagine.

Henry Gering had been at Erkinholme a year and more, and he and I were fast friends despite disparity of age. I

was a very different youth from the wild lad he had come to teach, for I had grown greatly both in mind and body, and though as keen on sport and frolic as ever, I had begun to see there were other things worth striving after, and no longer found my tasks irksome and deemed it wasted time to be an hour indoors. It was, then, upon a very fine day in May that we in Erkinholme were surprised for the second time. Very well do I remember it as one of those clear, bright days with a certain shrewdness in the air, telling that spring yet lingered, loth to leave us. I was sitting idly on a bench of stone near the courtyard gate, watching the rooks flapping heavily nestwards, twig-laden or cawing noisily to their mates, and catching the call or answer of a cuckoo from the woods by the river's bank. Of a sudden there came the distant sound of horse hoofs to my ears, and I sat up and waited expectantly, though, from where I was, I could not see the highway.

I was of opinion that it was my father returning from one of his usual trips to Edinburgh town, and I thirsted for news of what was doing there and in the world outside us, and I wondered if things had gone well with him, for I knew he had been at law with Elliot of Lea anent two grass fields and certain damage done by cattle. It meant a good deal to our peace and comfort how things had gone, and so I waited with impatience and then with curiosity, for borne to me upon the evening wind came a double tattoo, a heavy pounding like that of my father's old brown cob and a lighter stroke, which was new to me. Nearer and nearer drew the sounds, and I leaned forward hands on knees to get the first glimpse of the riders as they rounded the wooded corner of the branch road leading uphill to the house.

Thud, clatter, thud! and then sure enough my father hove in sight, sitting very square upon his broad-chested nag; but I gave a whistle of astonishment, for beside him trotted a palfrey with a woman on its back. I remember thinking at that moment how prettily she sat her beast, rising and falling to the swinging trot with ease and grace; and then, before I could admire further or wonder more, they were upon me.

At a glance I saw that the woman was young, a mere girl, and I noted a very pleasant colour in her face and a

sparkle in her eyes. Indeed, so pleasant was the one and so well worth watching the other, that I forgot both my father and my manners, and sat and stared at her, and she in turn stared hard at me no whit abashed. How long I might thus have sat I cannot tell, for they had reined up at the gate, but I was brought quickly to my senses by my father's voice.

"Ye muckle lout!" he cried, "where are your manners? Is this all your tutoring has done for you? To your feet, sir, to your feet, and make your reverence!"

I flushed hotly, rose slowly to my full height, and was about to do as he bade me, when my glance lit again on the girl's face, and I saw her lip curl into a smile at my clumsiness and lack of breeding.

Now I had in those days a very foolish pride, and was mightily sensitive about small matters, and the girl's bearing angered me.

"I crave your pardon, sir," I said, "but I do not know this lady's name, and"—

"What!" he shouted, "ye would bandy words with me, ye unmannerly loon? Did I not tell ye, Mistress Dorothy," he went on, turning to the girl, "that I had a great bear for a son? Do as I bid ye, sir!"

I looked first at him and then at the stranger. She had a very mischievous twinkle in her eye, but for all that I was about to make my reverence, though feeling a great fool for my pains, when she leaned over towards her companion, and, in a whisper which was only half a whisper, said very archly—

"But, Mr. Oliphant, have we paid for the show?"

I heard her very plainly, and without so much as a word or a look I swung round upon my heels, and marched homewards, with my head very high in the air, my shoulders squared, and a burning spot on either cheek.

"Was I, Allan Oliphant of Erkinholme, to be befooled by this mere chit of a girl?" I asked myself. I did not even know who she was or whence she came. Mistress Dorothy, my father had called her. "A pretty name," I thought, "while she herself"—but just then I heard her laughing merrily at my discomfiture, and I could not forgive her jest and the slight put upon me.

I heard the horses' shoes clanging on the courtyard flags, I heard my father call after me in a good-humoured voice, but I paid no heed, and, slipping round the house, I got me to the old garden to think over the matter. The more I thought upon it the more did it puzzle me.

This stranger was a Southron by her tongue, and, as far as I knew, we had no acquaintance of her name. Had my father been playing the knight-errant? He had played it once and might do so again, though it was not over likely at his time of life. My mother, who kept no secrets from me as a rule, had said nothing of this girl's coming.

"Egad," said I to myself, "'tis a puzzle," and could get no further. I soon felt I was not likely to solve the riddle in this way, and, when I came to think upon matters more calmly, I was not sure but that I had made a great ass of myself. Nor did I see how I was to get out of my difficulty, for I had my father's dourness in no small measure, and I did not fancy craving pardon like a child who has done wrong.

And yet, well, to tell the truth, it was near time for supper, and I had a very healthy hunger in those days, and did not fancy an empty stomach for the sake of any miss who chose to make pert speeches.

"Well," thought I to myself, "I must brazen it out, and, if that fails, pocket my pride," for after all I was not much more than a boy, and had a boy's eye for supper and such-like trifles.

With a shrug of my shoulders, a trick I had even in those days, I took my way indoors, where no one seemed stirring, and, having seen to my hands and hair with more care than was usual with me, I went quietly down the stairs, for my chamber was in the old part of the house, and entered the room in which we dined.

Full of memories is that place to me, a long, low room with a heavy roof of blackened oak, the joists showing, where spiders loved to spin their webs, but had a sorry time of it under my mother's ruthless sway. The windows were deep set and looked out upon a garden bed, which just then was gay with early flowers, while the light thus late in the afternoon filtered through the diamond panes but feebly. The setting of the table showed no sign of the

poverty which pinched us, and I saw at a glance there was to be somewhat of a feast. It was not every day that two fat pullets and a side of bacon graced our board, to say nothing of a great cold pasty and a shoulder of lamb. Nor as a rule was there such a show of silver, and it was but rarely that the spoons adorned with the crest of the house of Oliphant made their appearance.

"There must be something very special about this maid," thought I, taking stock of the good things before me, and then not knowing I spoke aloud. "It may be a good thing she has come, after all," said I.

"Indeed, sir, I am much beholden to you," replied a voice I knew, and turning sharply, I found myself face to face with the subject of my thoughts, who had stolen in unheard, and who straightway swept me a curtsey.

I had time to look at her more closely, and saw that she was older than I had thought. She was tall, reaching nearly to a level with my chin, and her figure, though she had not yet reached woman's estate, showed fair sign of promise.

She had a wealth of hair of a rich brown hue, that colour for which we have no name, but which in certain lights shows ruddy or golden tints, and it was coiled about a very shapely head, adorned by a pair of wonderfully clear grey eyes, a clean-cut nose well freckled across the bridge, and a mouth which seemed made for laughter, were one to judge from its lip curves. She had changed her habit for some dress of dark stuff, and had a white kerchief folded across her shoulders, and it struck me she made a very dainty picture as she stood demurely before me in the fading light.

"Well," said she, "perhaps if you have done you will tell me why it may be a good thing she has come after all."

"Hum," said I, and looked at her and then at the table; "hum," I said again, and reddened under her gaze.

"Ah," she cried suddenly, "I see how it is! Fie, sir, fie! Your father told me some things to your discredit but none so bad as this. Why," she went on, "I had ever heard you Scotch were a courtly race, but I fear"—

"That I am an exception to the rule," I broke in, speaking perhaps with some bitterness, for I felt that things had gone against me, and though but a boy in years I was wont to

think like a man, and so felt my position more acutely than may be thought possible in one of my age.

“Well,” she said, “you have interrupted me, and that was not what I was going to say ; but we shall cry quits, if it please you. I was rude at the gate and so were you, and now you have been rude again ; for it is not always safe to think aloud, you know. The odds are with me, I think, but I am willing to cry quits if it is to your liking, Master Allan.”

She held out her hand very frankly, and I took it in my own great paw, and then hesitated, not quite knowing what to do, while she looked at me with an amused expression.

I had not courage to raise it to my lips, and was merely about to shake it heartily, when in all probability I should have hurt her, for it was a very small hand that lay in my fist—I say I was about to give it a hearty grip, when the door was pushed open, and there entered Henry Gering.

CHAPTER III

A LITTLE ROGUE

SO quick is the monster with the green eye to seize his victim, that for the first time since my tutor came I disliked his presence and wished him elsewhere. I dropped the hand I held, and at any other time would have been diverted by the way Master Gering stumbled into the room. He always forgot that there was a certain step at the door to be taken carefully, and as usual he entered with something of a rush, and staggered and clutched at Mistress Dorothy, who, having her back to him, gave a little cry of astonishment, and turned sharply.

"I crave your pardon, Mistress Oliphant, I crave your pardon, but the light is bad and the step a stumbling-block," he began, as he was wont to do every second day in the year; and then, as he got no answer, he looked closely at us, and his face was a study. I half hoped that he would show to no better purpose than I had done, but to my dismay, and despite the manner of his entry, he seemed to gather his wits very quickly, and bowed low and again made his apology.

"Ah," said the girl, as she heard his voice, "I think I have the pleasure of being addressed by a countryman; is it not so? Pray present me to your friend, Master Allan."

"Where had this mere lassie got her readiness of speech and assured ways?" I wondered, as I made shift to do as she asked.

"Master Gering," said I, "let me present to you Mistress"—and there I paused and looked at her. "I fear," said I, "that I do not know your name."

"Am I to take that for another compliment, Master Allan?" she asked; "your memory is short."

I glanced at my tutor, and he stood gazing at us with a bewildered smile upon his face, as was no marvel.

"Tit for tat," I thought. "And if it is," said I, "so is

your name. Master Gering, Mistress Dorothy, who has no surname."

My tutor bowed again, and coughed behind his hand; but I had raised a storm, for the girl turned upon me in a trice.

I was cool enough now, and listened calmly as she gave me what my good mother would have called a down-setting. Henry Gering looked at her in dismay, for her tongue went like a bell-clapper, and seeing me quiet and composed served but to make her the more angry. I know now what it was that roused her, and can see how ill-timed was my jest; but then I merely thought her passionate and very touchy about nothing, although at the same time it came into my mind that she looked very well when in a rage. She had drawn herself up, her great eyes blazed with anger, her little hands were tightly clenched, and she kept tapping with her foot upon the floor while she poured out a torrent of sarcasm upon me, and showed herself possessed of a very pretty temper and a very pretty wit.

She came to an end at last, and stood panting and out of breath, while I, in nearly as great a rage as herself, made her a mock bow, and said, forgetting she was a stranger and a guest—

"All this is very well, madam, but we have not yet heard your name."

"My name!" she cried, "well, know that it is Mistress Dorothy Wayward. Does that please you, insolent?"

"Excellently well," I answered, with a short laugh, "and it suits you as though made for you," and I had half a mind to tell her a couplet which kept running in my head—

"Dorothy Wayward is her name,
And wayward is her nature."

Whether I should have done so or not I cannot tell, for at that moment the courtyard bell began its clanging, and my mother entered the room, closely followed by my father.

My mother's face was troubled, I could see, while my father looked very well pleased with himself, and gave Henry Gering a playful tap upon the shoulder, much to the good man's astonishment, for he had never been so treated by John Oliphant before, and knew not what to make of it.

It was too dark for them to notice my flushed face, or to

mark the trace of temper on the girl's brow, and these signs of our war of words had passed away when old Mat brought in the candlesticks and took post behind my father's chair.

Somehow or other we found our places at the table, my mother setting Mistress Dorothy opposite me and Henry Gering, so that she was by herself, and a sort of lonely look about her made me feel some pity, in spite of the defiant glance she gave me as we sat down. Not a word had been spoken by one of us all this time, but such was our usual custom, to keep silent till my father had said grace. Now John Oliphant had a very curious manner of asking a blessing. I have never been able to discover whether he had in the first place made use of the long string of words merely to plague my mother, and so fallen into the habit, or whether he liked to keep us waiting while the dishes cooled and the maids fretted. Certain it is that he hated an interruption when once upon his feet, and woe betide the offender! but little did I think that Mistress Dorothy knew of this trait in his character, though I found out thereafter that he had informed her of much besides my many shortcomings.

His grace was as strange as it was long, for it began with a prayer for Church and State, petitioned that we might be delivered from blood-guiltiness, and concluded by beseeching the Lord to come over the mountains of our provocations, which in his case I well knew meant his latest lawsuit. Never a word was there as to the food before him, which had more than once been spoiled by his long-windedness; but no one dared remonstrate with him, and so we had come to listen with patience if not with a good grace. I did not so much as hear a word that evening, at least at first, for I was watching the stranger to see how she fancied his oration. She had her face hid very reverently in her hands to all appearance, but I soon discovered that she was taking stock of us through her fingers.

"The little rogue!" I thought, and then looked at her more keenly, for it seemed to me she was doing her best to attract my notice. Her eyes met mine, and then glanced sideways again and again, and the little finger of her left hand made me a signal, as though pointing at something. It dawned upon me that she wished me to look at Henry Gering, and, feeling pleased at this friendly sign, I turned and

did so. For a moment I saw nothing peculiar, and fancied that my poor tutor's devoutness was a source of amusement to her; for Henry Gering always sat with his head bowed and his eyes closely shut, his face very solemn, and not a muscle of his frame moving to all appearance. I had sometimes thought he had even ceased to breathe, but no man could have done so and lived during the whole of John Oliphant's discourse. I soon saw, however, that there was something special upon this occasion, for I made out a great and hairy spider, which had somehow escaped my mother's vigilance and was now making a playground of Henry Gering's shoulder. As I watched, it began to run quickly upwards. It reached his collar, and then darted on to his neck. I saw his skin twitch at the touch of its long legs, but he made never a sign, and upwards climbed the spider. He gave his head a sharp shake once or twice without effect, while I, half choked with laughter, watched the game. The spider had no doubt an inquiring mind, for next moment it was upon his ear, and then, with a quick run, had vanished inside. This was more than mortal man could stand, and my worthy tutor, whose face had borne witness to his feelings, clapped his hand to his ear in most indecent haste, while I, forgetting the place and the time, broke into a roar of merriment.

I checked myself, but I was too late.

"Come over the mountains of our provocations," I heard my father say, in the curious sing-song voice he affected at such times, and then, without so much as a pause, he continued, "and look in mercy on this son of Belial, who is profane and without reverence, and whose untimely mirth is like to bring a curse upon this household, and so bring him to see the error of his ways ere it be too late"; and then he finished in his usual manner, but with a very sonorous "Amen," which I knew boded me no good.

"Leave the room, sir," he said, fixing me with that look in his eye which I knew better than to disobey, and so I had nothing left for it but to get upon my feet and make my exit; nor was this made easier by the look of conscious triumph I saw in Mistress Dorothy's grey eyes. I went supperless to bed that night, and yet I did not grudge her the victory, for I would not have missed the sight of that

spider and Henry Gering's face for a great deal, while her clever strategy, and the humour of the whole affair, appealed to me strongly, and I felt that we were better friends as a result. And such I found to be the case next morning, for she met me frankly, looking very fresh and fair, and without a trace of ill-will. My father also seemed to have forgotten both the incident at the gate and that at the supper-table, for he was in high good humour, having won his case on all three points, and, as he said, "left Elliot blaspheming his Maker in the High Street, and wishing every man of law in perdition."

I soon found, however, that I was not in such favour with Mistress Dorothy as was my tutor, though, had I reasoned sensibly, I might have seen it was but natural. He was an Englishman, and she an English maid; she was young, some seventeen summers perhaps, while he looked thirty, and no doubt she took him for nearer forty, and thus felt more at her ease with him than with one of about her own age.

However that may be, it was Henry Gering she consulted, when the carrier brought her box, as to where she should put this and that pretty trifle, things not one of us, unless it was my father, had ever seen before. I doubt if my tutor had seen them either, but he and my mother gave the maid much good advice, while I kicked my heels in the courtyard. I felt a trifle cheerier when I heard she was to study under Henry Gering, for I fancied we should learn together; but I grumbled inwardly when I found that my tutor had no such intention, and I felt not a little aggrieved when he gravely told me that in some matters of history and in knowledge of foreign tongues she was far beyond me, and, as he confessed very humbly, could teach him a thing or two.

I learned something about her from my mother, though my father had not chosen to tell her much, albeit it was perhaps all he knew himself.

It seems her mother had died long since, and her father, a wealthy man and titled, it was said, had been guilty of some crime or other, had changed his name,—hence her rage at my foolish jest,—and found it convenient to live abroad, while she, under charge of a guardian she had never seen, had lived with a family of good position in London

town. This to some extent accounted for her self-possession and *sang-froid*, as the French say; for from an early age she had been left to fend for herself amongst strange folk, who liked her well enough, but liked the money she brought them still more.

My mother shrewdly guessed she had been pestered by the son of the house, and that her guardian had committed her to my father's safe keeping at a good distance from her former troubles; but she knew nothing definite as to this, nor could she tell me who this guardian was, or where he lived, or what he did. She gave me to understand also that this maid, young as she was, had undergone some great trouble; for this she had learned from Mistress Dorothy herself, my mother being one of those kindly, motherly souls in whom one confides at first sight. The nature of this trial she did not know, or, if she did, she would not tell me of it, only saying it had not concerned Mistress Dorothy herself.

"Puir lassie!" she cried, "ye maun be kind tae her, Allan, for she's in a strange land wi' strange folk, and has no mither o' her ain. I doubt me she's a wee bit quick in the temper, but then she's quick in the uptake, and the twa often gang taegither, so bear and forbear, laddie; and as she's gotten a bonnie face, ca' canny, my son, for ye see we dinna ken ower muckle aboot her, and she's English as weel."

I smiled at this queer mixture of advice, but it was very typical of my mother, whose kindly heart went out to the stranger and yet was a little jealous of her on my account, and doubted her as having been brought up in a great city and in the lap of Prelacy. The girl herself, however, seemed to have no objection to our sterner form of worship, though she was at a loss the first Sabbath she went to kirk, for she found nothing to kneel upon, no book to guide her, and nothing to do but sing the long measures to which our psalms are set, and which she could not master all at once. Very wisely, as I thought, she fell asleep while the old minister prosed for his full hour, and I, in watching her, found the time pass very quickly, and had no need to abstract my thoughts or to play at a very ingenious game I had invented with the books and a few pins, and which in past days had got me many a flogging.

It will be very clear to you, good reader, that I, who knew nothing of maids beyond the village lassies, had fallen an easy victim to her charms; but if you hope for a pretty love tale I crave your pardon, for I have to tell of sterner things than a lad's dreams, and imaginings, and heart-burnings. Nay, rather must my story be of plots and plotting, war and rumour of war, strange lands and strange deeds, queer folk and queerer places, with a sprinkling of the dangers which have to do with state craft and the love of power. Only to those who love to hear of such things I would say, "Tarry a little," for the old, old story is often the beginning of many a strange tale, and truly such I found it to be in my case. I had thought when Henry Gering came that he had won his way into our favour very soon, but his wiles were nothing to those of this lassie, who in a month's time could twist us all round her little finger, not even excepting my father, who found pleasure in riding with her, and used to listen to her chatter with a dry smile on his lips, while now and then she even forced a laugh from him. Nor was this in any way extraordinary, for rarely have I listened to such witty speech. She was a keen observer, and had seen life in varied shapes, and to hear her contrast the Scotch nature with the English was a treat, though one more enjoyed by Henry Gering than the rest of us; for she had detected the weak places in our armour and did not spare us, though she gave credit where credit was due. She would also tell us in a very stirring fashion of her adventures in the voyage from London to the port o' Leith, for she had come north under care of a skipper, who proved a good-natured but drunken rogue, and she could take him off to the life when in the mood, mimicking his roll, and hoarse voice, and hiccup, till we seemed to see the old salt before us, red-nosed and bleary-eyed and half-seas over, instead of his whilom pretty passenger. It may be thought that such speech from a young maid must have seemed forward and unseemly, but such was not the case, for she was never rude nor self-assertive, only quick-witted and clever-tongued, and if she said an unkind thing was the first to regret it and ask forgiveness.

She wrought a great change at Erkinholme as the months

passed by. My mother found in her a companion and a ready help, the younger children looked upon her as a nurse and playmate, my father was kept amused, and, as a good board was paid for her, gave up his town journeys and bickerings at law, and turned more to his secret work and to improving his estate, which sadly needed his care.

I have said enough to show what effect her coming had on me, but the greatest change was in Henry Gering. It came about gradually, but was none the less sure. He lost his shy and helpless ways, and seemed more confident of himself. They had much in common, and for the first time we found that the scholar knew more of the world and its ways than we had imagined. His conversation broadened, and, to my surprise, I came to see that a very clever and subtle brain lay hid within his skull. All that was best in him, which till then had remained dormant, seemed to wake into life and energy, and, like myself, he began to pay more heed to his dress and appearance; and I shall not readily forget the uneasy amusement I felt when I found he had ordered a suit of a fashionable cut and a dressing-case from Edinburgh. It was clear he felt grave doubts as to the wisdom of what he did, and I fancy he often took himself to task; but perchance I judged of his feelings from my own, for I also did many foolish things in those days. There is no doubt both his outer and inner man improved. He lost his stoop and much of his silent ways, he gave up his beloved snuff, and he kept his hair within bounds, so that I swear his fellow-students would not have known him for the same man. I have often thought since that all this must have been a strange game to witness, and I am certain my father had many a quiet chuckle to himself, and my mother many a wakeful night. Mistress Dorothy herself seemed quite unconseious of her power, and treated me as a brother, to my great disgust, and my tutor as her tutor, no doubt to his great annoyance, though he showed no sign of it. I used to argue the matter out to myself, place his chances against mine, and reason thus:—

“I am not ill favoured; I am tall, strong, and no fool. Surely I should have better luck than this good-natured, awkward, scholarly Englishman, who, do as he will, cannot

shake off all his queer habits, and cannot change his long, gaunt body and solemn face"; but for all that I felt ill at ease, for I myself had experienced the subtle charm of this man's company, and knew that when he talked and smiled one forgot his peculiarities and the fact that nature had been unkind to him.

Alas! I was not conscious then as I am now of my many faults in those days. I am an old man, and have seen much and undergone much. I have passed through the mill, and had some of the chaff sifted from the grain, and without boast I can say now that I was a good-hearted lad enough; but I can see clearly that I was very proud and headstrong, with an overweening conceit, self-conscious, and not a little selfish. I can only thank God if I am not altogether now as I was then; but I was to learn in a hard school that Allan Oliphant was not the great man he thought himself, but a very ordinary person, with a few gifts and graces, not of his own making, and that he had let even those lie fallow till they were almost choked by a ranker growth.

It is very bitter for me to think of those days, and still more bitter will it be for me to tell of what came to pass at Erkinholme; but I have set myself to the task, and I shall not turn back, but tell the truth plainly, neither sparing myself nor making light of my faults. And if I have been rewarded good for evil I can only say that I am deeply thankful, and have striven to do penance for some of the evil which I wrought, though to my dying day I shall carry with me a horror of a certain action, which drove Henry Gering from Erkinholme and made me an adventurer and a wanderer, but at length, by the grace of God, a man.

CHAPTER IV

HOW HENRY GERING LANDED TWO STRANGE FISH

THE time passed on as is the way with time, and the little comedy in the old border house progressed ; but I have no space to tell of all its side acts, and, as I have said, this is no love story. Both Mistress Dorothy and myself were growing beyond the age when we had need of a tutor's services, and, though I hated myself for the thought, I longed at times to see the last of Henry Gering. It is true no one could have told which of us the girl favoured. She did not quarrel with him as with me, but this was of small account in Scotland, where we have a proverb too well known to need repetition. She had indeed long since read our secrets, for they were plain to any fool, but she gave no sign of interest, and outwardly was as merry and wayward as ever. For one hour she spent fishing with me,—she had taken very lovingly to the sport,—she spent two in converse with my tutor, and for the two hours she and I spent in a ramble after berries or birds' nests, she spent one reading history with him. All the time there was no war between us, but I held aloof from his company, although I knew my bearing pained him deeply.

“What has come over you, Allan?” he would say, for he alone was blind, blinded by his own passion ; and when I would turn away irritably, he used to sigh gravely and make matters worse by saying, “I fear you are ailing, lad, and need a change. I must speak to your father about it, for your mother laughs at me when I mention it.”

“I will thank you to do no such thing.” I would reply hotly, scarce keeping my temper within bounds, for to me the man's folly was incredible ; but he would only go away shaking his head sadly, and with an anxious look on his kindly face.

I had not the courage to put the matter to a decisive test, for I was ill in mind if not in body, and instead I did two mean things, for which even yet I blush.

Henry Gering had come here on my account, I reasoned, and now I had no need of him. His salary, small though it was, yet meant something to my father, and I argued with myself it would be better for all that he should go. I did not think of what was to become of him, of the weary struggle he had known in the past, and of which he had told me something. I chose to forget the patience and kindness he had shown towards me. I put out of my mind the thought of all the trouble he had taken to enlarge my ideas, and his good humour in striving to mould his tastes to mine. I crushed down these memories and quieted my conscience with that evil motto, "All is fair in love and war"; and so, fool that I was, I interviewed my father.

He was in his secret room, which I had now permission to enter, and in which he had striven in vain to interest me. My mind had been too full of other matters, although at any other time his glass vials and retorts, his furnace and his curiously coloured fluids, his weird experiments and strange mysteries would have fascinated me. I had chosen an evil place and time for my mission, for my father thought I had come to lend him a helping hand, and so received me graciously. Never shall I forget how his face altered as I gradually came to tell him what I wanted. I laid stress on the payment of Henry Gering's salary, I spoke of my own learning and attainments; but long before I came to the point I saw my case was hopeless. My father let me finish, and then looked me up and down from under his drooping lids, till I winced beneath his keen glance.

"So," he said, with that sneer he could so well affect, "so I have at last found an Oliphant who could stab a rival in the back, an Oliphant a coward and traitor, and that Oliphant my son!"

I grew pale to the lips, for the words, though just, were cruel; but I stood before him dumb. I had always somehow imagined my father a man of easy morals, a man who, beyond much dourness in legal matters, was content to let things pass easily so long as they did not trouble him, but I

had read him very poorly. I know now—for, since his death, my mother told me much about him—that there was an under-current of a steadfast honesty and uprightness in his character, that anything mean and underhand was abhorrent to him, that he was one man to the world and another to himself, and for the first time that day I got a true glimpse of the latter.

“Listen to me, sir,” he said sternly; “if anyone goes it shall not be Henry Gering. Make your choice: a fair field and no favour, or away with you. Had you not come to me thus like a thief in the night, I might have helped you in an honourable way; but now I find, God help me, that you are not worthy of this girl, and yet you are my son and an Oliphant. You may well look ashamed; and now, go, and strive to become, what I fain hope you once were, a gentleman.”

I left his presence with a wild tumult swelling in my breast, and the thought of better things and noble deeds rising in my mind; but again came the tempter, and whispered that he had made no allowance, that craft was clever and strategy a gift, and within a week I had fallen again.

This time I carried my tale to old Mat Kerr, who in the matter proved an evil counsellor. No doubt he advised me to do as he would have done himself, for, as I have hinted, this stern old blue-bonnet had been a dare-devil in his youth, though curiously enough a dare-devil for religion and the Covenant.

“Hoots,” said he, “I wunner at ye, Maister Allan; ’tis plain as a pikestaff that the better man maun win. I doot me it will be gey hard to mak’ the Englishman fecht, but fecht ye he must; and gin ye beat him, he maun go. No’ that he is a bad creetur. He laeks speerit, and I misdoot me is a malignant at heart, but he is aye ready wi’ his gude-day and his hansel at the New Year. Still, a man maun fecht for his ain haund, and never venture never win, ye ken; and for that matter the Lord Himself was great on strategy, as ye ea’ it,” and with that he whipped out his breeches Bible, and kept me half an hour with the Israelites, and so left me half convinced.

I doubt, mad though I was, if ever I would have gone

to such extremes had not an event occurred which seemed to me to bring my chances to a minimum, and left me in despair. It is a curious thing that this circumstance and another, which influenced all my after-life, were, so to speak, due to the old river of which I have written so much, and I fear so feebly; but so it was. I made up my mind one day, though not without misgivings, to discard old Mat's advice, and put the matter to the test—in other words, to plead my own cause and learn my fate. I think I was helped to this decision by the fact that Mistress Dorothy had been very friendly with me of late, and had for some time past been at pains to instruct me in the French language, rapping me very sharply over the knuckles when I made a mess of a word, as I very often, and sometimes on purpose, did. She had indeed threatened to stop her lessons, but that was merely because I was making some progress, and found this new tongue a very excellent one for banter and repartee. Little did I think that I should have cause to use it for very different purposes, and that my knowledge of it was to be nearly worth my life to me. My mind made up, I waited for a convenient time to press my suit, and at last deemed myself lucky. I had been sent upon a message to a farm, and on returning heard that Mistress Dorothy had set off for the river, which was in excellent trim, being swollen and drumly after heavy rain. I quickly found that my rod had vanished from its place, in what out of courtesy was called the hall, and I counted this a fortunate chance. She had always begged the loan of it on previous occasions, but now she seemed to have made free with it. Here was my opportunity!

She was welcome to the rod, or anything else I had, but I would make this a pretext for putting her in the wrong; and then, why then, it would be a case of asking for pardon on her part, and asking for something else on mine, and so on, and so on. I let my thoughts run riot, fool that I was! for I would have changed my tune had I known, as I knew long afterwards, that Henry Gering had at the same time come to the same decision as myself, and, as an excuse for going riverwards, had taken my rod with him, his own having come to grief at the time of the last spate.

Ignorant of all this I set off, cheerily whistling a merry

tune, for it was a day to raise one's spirits in any case. The sun was coming out in blinks, now that the rain had ceased, and everything was sparkling in his beams, while the air had a glorious freshness, and far off one could hear the Tweed thundering on its course. Ere long I came in sight of the river, and stood awhile to watch it. Brown and frothy it swept along in resistless might, spouting over rocks and boulders in ale-coloured sheets, churned into creamy froth by jagged rock ridges, and bearing tree branches and débris on its mighty bosom.

Very wild and dangerous the water looked, and scarce in a fit state for either fly or worm ; but my fishing, I thought, had haply little to do with the state of Tweed, but thought wrongly. I knew all Mistress Dorothy's favourite places, and so went with the current, past where it surged between wide banks in a great, smooth, swirling rush ; past where it leapt, and splashed, and sprayed over a shallow, gravelly bed, to where it foamed, and boiled, and dashed itself against rocky banks ; where the bubbles raced past at lightning speed ; where, in a channel deep and narrow, the waters seemed to feel a fury at being bounded, and gurgled or thundered with a loud complaining, so that, standing on the brink, one felt deafened and giddy, and well-nigh stumbled like a drunken man.

"I hope," I muttered, "that she has not come here, though it is the only likely place in such a jumble" ; but sure enough she had, and next moment, as I rounded a corner, I caught sight of her, and stood still to watch, but not for long.

And yet it was a picture well worth watching. From where I was one could see a long stretch of the river, from the deep and narrow part to the broad curve which vanished from sight behind the opposite shore. The sun was casting a strong light across the waters' angry face, a gleam which showed up the whole wild scene, and clearly outlined against sky and flood stood Dorothy Wayward.

Her three-cornered hat was gone, and her hair was streaming out behind her, as with both hands she kept a strain on the rod, while one could note the lithe and subtle grace which lay in every curve of her figure. She had hooked a heavy fish, that was clear, for the ash was bending

in a great curve, and she was standing on a rock ledge above a favourite lie for trout and salmon. It was clear also that without aid she would never land the fish, though she had the net with her, and so I was about to hasten to her help, when away beyond her on the same bank I saw my tutor also making for her fast as his long legs would carry him.

I fear I cursed at the sight, and, eager to be first and to let her know of my presence, I halloaed with all my might. She heard my voice above the river's roar, and half turned; but as she did so, to my horror she lost her balance, swayed and staggered for a moment, clutching the rod gamely all the time; and then, before I could reach her, she was gone.

"Now was my chance," thought I, and heedless and careless rushed out upon the ledge, throwing off my coat as I ran; but just as I reached the edge my feet slipped upon the wet rock, and, with a stunning crash, I came down upon my back. My head drove violently against a ridge, a crimson veil seemed to pass before my eyes, I saw as through a ruddy mist the girl's body sweeping down stream, and then, with a dull chill of fear, I felt myself, helpless and well-nigh senseless, roll heavily into the river; and as the cold waters buffeted and choked me, light and reason fled together, and I knew no more.

"Allan! Allan!" I heard a voice crying faintly, but a feeling of stupor I could not throw off possessed me, and I lay dreamily with eyes closed, curious ideas flitting through my brain to the tune of a dull throbbing and a play of lights. I was conscious of being roughly shaken, and lazily opened my eyes, but shut them again, for the glare upon them was painful to me.

"Thank God!" I heard a deep voice sob, and again I roused myself, and saw my tutor bending over me with a drawn and anxious face, down which a big tear was coursing, which presently splashed upon my cheek.

"Tut, tut!" I heard Henry Gering mutter as he passed his hand across his eyes, and I dully felt that I had caught him unawares, and smiled faintly, at which I saw his face brighten all at once. He nodded cheerily, and then left me, and I noted he was dripping wet.

"Where was I, and what did all this mean?" I asked myself, and then like a flash there came upon me the memory of Dorothy and my fall. I was safe, then, but what of her?

With an effort I sat up and stared about me, conscious of a sick feeling and a great heaviness in the head, but I forgot both when I caught sight of the girl stretched upon the grass, and my tutor kneeling beside her. He had saved us both, then.

A surge of anger swept over me when I thought of my cruel ill-luck, and all the time I was racked with fear that Dorothy was dead, and that I was to blame.

I got upon my feet and staggered towards them, but drew back and stood still as Henry Gering passed an arm about her and helped her to sit up. I could see that she was very pale, her hair clinging to her face and neck, her dress soaked and torn in places, but she seemed unhurt, and was rewarding her rescuer with a smile.

A lump rose into my throat as I stood, sick and forgotten. I ground my teeth in a bitter rage, and though I remembered my tutor's anxious face, I drove the thought of it aside and cursed him. I turned and with uncertain step started for home, for I found he had landed us one after the other, and as I afterwards learned, at great risk, on the bank beneath the deep rock channel. I was scarce fit to walk, and was without my coat, but that dourness and grit I got from my father came to my aid, and I gained strength with every step.

Suddenly I heard a call, and then another, but I paid no heed. I would be alone in my misery, even although it was Dorothy's voice that called me for the second time. And then I heard Gering shout after me, but held steadily on, neither slacking my pace nor looking behind, a very Christian, but one with a heavy heart and with no paradise as goal.

On I plodded till I heard rapid footsteps behind me and till a hand was laid upon my shoulder. I turned, and there was my tutor, who looked at me curiously while he breathed hard, having run to overtake me.

"What is it, Allan?" he said. "I fear your head is hurt."

"My name is Oliphant," I answered, in a voice I scarce knew for my own, so choked was it with rage and chagrin.

"Come, come, lad," he said, "you are not yourself; did you not hear Dorothy call you?"

"Who?" I shouted fiercely.

He flushed at my tone, and no wonder.

"Are you in pain, boy?" he asked sharply.

"Curse you!" I cried, "cannot you let me alone? Have you not done enough mischief, you meddling Englishman? Leave go, I tell you, leave go," I shouted, as he took me by the arm.

"This is no way to speak to me, Allan," he said gravely, "but 'tis plain you are not yourself. Come, come, lad, you have left your coat behind you, and"—

"I shall leave my mark behind me," I growled, "if you do not leave me," and Mat Kerr's advice came into my mind.

"Why," said he kindly, paying no heed to my words, "your head is cut and bleeding; come and let me"—

Crash! I had struck him full upon the face, a cruel and cowardly blow.

He staggered a little, for I had taken him unawares, but recovering, he looked at me in a bewildered way, and passed his hand across his forehead, where my fist had caught him. Sick with myself and half crazed, I taunted him as a coward, scarce knowing what I said; but I must have touched him to the quick, for as I stopped, panting and breathless, he showed signs of anger.

"You withdraw what you have said?" he asked very quietly.

"Never," I answered, nor had I the least idea to what he referred.

"For God's sake, Allan, say you are not yourself, that you do not mean it, that"—

"I mean every word," I cried wildly, "every word, and I would have you know I am as sane as you are; and as a proof take that, and that!"

I rained blow after blow on him, striking him on the mouth and chest, and driving him before me, and then I suddenly found I had raised the devil in him. Breathing hard, and with an ugly light in his eyes, he made at me, his long arms going like flails, and thud, thud, his fist struck home. He pressed me so hotly that I had to give way, for

he had much greater strength than I had given him credit for having, and I was weak and giddy, and fought half-heartedly, knowing I was in the wrong. In five minutes I could scarce see, my lip was running red, and I was feebly trying to ward off his swinging blows. The thought flashed through my mind that I was being beaten, and then I heard Dorothy's voice calling on us from a distance; the dour spirit rose within me, and I took fresh courage. I fought more cunningly now, and let him weary himself, dodging his wild efforts, and gaining breath and strength. And then, as I knew he began to fail, I attacked him once more, and found him, his rage spent and his power gone, a child in my hands.

I punished him cruelly, striking viciously, though I scarcely saw him from between my swollen lids; but then he made hardly an effort, and went down before me on the grass, and I hit him as he fell.

I had won, but no victory ever gave less pleasure. Now that it was over I felt miserable and penitent, and stood with my chin upon my breast, pale and dejected. I was rudely roused, however, for the girl who was the unwitting cause of it all stood before me. I shall not repeat what she said in her rage and scorn, for she had seen me strike the first blow; suffice to say that I soon found I had put an end to whatever chance I had once had of winning her.

"He saved your life, too," she cried, the colour coming with a rush into her pale face, and making her in her wrath a thing of beauty, "your life and mine, and this is how you repay him!"

But here Henry Gering, who had got upon his feet again, interrupted her.

"I have been blind," he said, "but I see everything now. Poor boy, it is I who am to blame."

"You?" said Mistress Dorothy.

"Yes, yes," he went on hurriedly, "the strain has been too much for him. See, Allan, your pardon, lad," and he came close to me, holding out his hand, and I could see a streak of blood on his face.

Had he but known it, he was punishing me now as his blows could never have done.

"You shall not ask his pardon," cried the girl; "why, he is wholly in the wrong, and he is not a child."

"No, no," said my tutor; "come, Allan, let us be friends again."

I was beaten now, and half in tears; a moment more and we would have sealed the compact, but Dorothy said sharply—

"Henry, if you are friends with this coward, you are no longer friend of mine."

She was just, as my father had been just, and cruel, as he had been cruel, and I grew hard and bitter again as she spoke; for had I shown fear when I tried to save her? Henry she had called him, while Master Allan was the best I had ever got. My pride and folly had brought all this upon me, and yet I would not own it to myself. With a muttered curse,—I was too free with my tongue in those days,—I paid no heed to his proffered hand, but stumbled away, a sorry figure, and neither of them sought to check me, as I half hoped they would; and I began to hate Mistress Dorothy, while my anger against Henry Gering had died away, though twice that day he had played the man, while I had played the fool.

CHAPTER V

THE HORSE AND HIS RIDER

THEKE was no little stir when I reached Erkinholme and told my tale. I made no mention of the fight, and left them to believe that my swollen face and bleeding lip were wholly due to my fall and buffeting by the river, and I gave Henry Gering full credit for having rescued both of us. Then I slipped away to my own chamber, and did not see the others return, nor did I meet them till supper-time, when my mother was never tired of asking me questions; for my tutor would say nothing, and Mistress Dorothy was early taken with the headache. My mother seemed to have no suspicions, but I saw my father glance curiously at us, though he said nothing. My tutor had a great lump upon his temple, a scar upon his nose, and his knuckles looked bruised, while I was in a worse plight; so that, as we left the room, old Mat came close to me and whispered—

“Did ye hae the better o’ him, Maister Allan?”

I would not answer and walked past, at which I heard the old man mutter—

“I sair misdoot me the Englishman has won,” and he went off, shaking his head and clearly much perturbed: so that, partly out of pride, and partly for fear he should do Gering a mischief, I took him aside and told him the whole story, which so astonished him that he did nothing but whistle softly to himself, and scratch his head and whistle again, though I gathered that he both pitied me and thought me in error.

I slunk away to a quiet corner of the old garden behind a great hedge of yew, which had once been cut and trimmed into quaint shapes, but now grew as it listed, and so perhaps was quainter than ever. There I flung myself

upon a seat which was crumbling into dust with age, and its feeble, forgotten, and forlorn look somehow fitted in with my state of mind. My face was yet painful, feeling like a mass of heavy dough, and my lip smarted; but that pain was as nothing to the mental torture I passed through. I had done a very vile thing, as I well knew, and yet all the time I tried to prove to myself that I was scarce to blame, that events had been too much for me; but my conscience told me I had harboured these designs before, and would not let me rest.

I found now how I valued Henry Gering's friendship, and I thought how he had asked pardon of me—for what? For having saved Dorothy and myself, for having struck me after I had hit him twice upon the face and reviled him. There was only one thing that pleased me, and I think it showed how much of a boy I was and that there was some good still left in me; for I felt a joy in the mere fact that my tutor could fight if need be, that hidden away somewhere in his gentle soul there was a dull ember of the old Adam, which might be fanned into flame upon occasion.

I felt my swollen eyes curiously. There was no doubt he could strike a shrewd blow, and I felt a half pride in the fact that I had fought a grown man and had not been worsted. And as for this girl, well, she was a spitfire. I should be sorry for the man who wed her. Henry Gering might have her and welcome. I laughed at the thought of the strange couple they would make, but I fear my laugh was very tuneless and half-hearted, for other visions crept into my mind, strive as I might to keep them back.

"Well, well," I muttered to myself at length, "I shall make things right with him on the morrow," and with this good resolve, and wearied by the day's excitement, I fell asleep. When I wakened the gloaming had passed and it had grown dark. I stirred, and found myself very stiff and sore but less miserable in mind, and I was about to rise to go indoors when I heard voices close to me on the other side of the hedge.

"But you need not go, Henry; you were in the right."

It was Dorothy who spoke, very softly, in a fashion new to me, for there was a pleading tone in her voice

"Nay, nay," came the answer; "think what the poor lad has suffered. Had I been in his place"—

"You would have acted as a gentleman."

I writhed at the quick, proud ring in her voice, but I had no option but to sit still, for I could not creep away without being discovered. I might have closed my ears, 'tis true, but I can only say I did not; and, reader, had you been where I was, I doubt if you had done so.

"God knows," he replied, "but I must leave in any case. I have no fortune, and must make my way."

"But I shall have when I am of age, and it is all yours to do with as you will; you know it, Henry."

"I know," he answered gravely, "but do you take me for a churl?"

They passed on and their voices died away, but I sat motionless. So what I had wanted had come to pass. My tutor was going of his own accord. Fool that I had been! he would probably have gone in any case, and out of sight, out of mind. There was no saying what might have come to pass; while now—

But again I heard their voices as they passed my hiding-place on their way to the house.

"No, I shall hate him; he has driven you away, he is rude and rough, half-savage, like his precious country, of which he is so proud."

"Hush, hush, Dorothy; there is good in the lad, and I have had much kindness shown me here; and so, like my own"—

I heard no more, but I had heard enough. There were few men like Henry Gering I vowed to myself, and I would show him that I thought so; while Mistress Dorothy, with her airs and graces, might go hang. This was her gratitude for my having showed her all the beauties of bonnie Tweedside, for having taught her to throw a fly like any Scotch lass, for having risked life and limb on her behalf. She would hate me; well, that was a small matter, and two could play at that game. And so, in a very curious frame of mind, I rose and followed them within.

I did not sleep that night, however. There was a burning heat within my skull, my joints were racked with pain, and a shiver every now and then rippled through my frame. I turned and tossed, and tossed and turned;

neither my mind nor body could find rest, my mouth was parched, and my hands burning hot. I had never known a day's illness before, and took badly with this fever; but I fought silently with it all through the long watches, and in the morning dropped into a troubled dose. I little thought that three long weeks were to pass before I left my bed; but so it was, and as Henry Gering left the day after I was taken ill, making I know not what excuse to my father, my good resolve remained unfulfilled, and I feared he had gone away very sorrowfully, thinking me still at enmity with him.

These three weeks were to me more or less of a blank. At times I saw my mother's face, tear-stained and anxious, and once or twice Mistress Dorothy's, pale and sad, while I have some dim remembrance of John Oliphant upon his knees, and my brother David sobbing in a corner; but for the most part I lived in a world of my own, a dreamy world, peopled with strange shapes, which yet seemed half familiar, though now and then the dreaminess would go, and there would seem to be a fierce fight raging within me, while I shouted, and struggled, and babbled like a babe. I came to myself at last, weak and helpless, and with a horror of what I might have said as I lay delirious; but no one seemed to have paid any notice to my ravings, and I feared to question them.

Very slowly I gained back my strength and vigour, but found myself a pale, thoughtful mortal, who liked to be alone, and spoke little, and had a strange restlessness within him.

I pleased my father by offering to help him in his chemistry, for I was in the mood to potter with his crucibles, and fan his furnace, and stir his fluids, albeit I had little faith in his great plans. At the same time I learned quickly, and gave him a theory which he looked upon as heaven-sent, and worked upon it eagerly but without avail, ever seeming to come near his goal, and yet never reaching it; and I began to weary of our fruitless efforts, and marvelled how he could have kept at it all these long years. I think, however, he was a trifle crazed on this subject, though it was worth while hearing this cool and self-possessed cynic letting his thoughts run riot, and speaking of fame and wealth beyond the dreams of

avarice, the while he dropped a crimson fluid with a shaking hand, or peered nervously into the depths of a great crucible. I should never have known him as my father when these moods came upon him, and it was strange to mark how his excitement grew and then died down again, leaving him the pale, passionless man with the drooping lids and mouth and stained finger nails.

My mother was very kind to me in those days, for she ever understood me as no other person did, and I fancy she guessed that Erkinholme was growing too small for me, and she could not forget how nearly I had quitted it before my time.

As for Dorothy, I was upon a curious footing with her. We were all politeness, but cool as two icicles, and I knew she had not forgiven me, despite my mother's tales of how the girl had watched me many a night, and kept my head-cloths cool, and cried bitterly when all hope had gone. 'Tis true I could not quite understand all this, but it did not alter my feelings toward her, which were those of a quiet anger and a bitter resentment, though there was an under-current of something else, of something I could not or would not name, but which grew stronger as the days sped past.

For company, when I wanted it, I had my brother, a merry laddie, up to every roguery under the sun, a bare-legged rascal with a sunburnt face, and a great love and reverence for me, which I deserved but little. I have said that I was restless and dissatisfied, and I found this feeling growing stronger within me. It was merely the fact that I had no plan, that I had no bias one way or the other, which kept me from setting out in quest of what fate might have in store for me; and I never listened to one of old Mat's stirring tales but I felt an itching to be up and away. This spirit was also fostered in me by the rumours which reached us now and then. The land was troubled, we heard of armings and of plots, and once or twice I saw a courier flying north, spurring as though his neck depended on it, and clearing the road with a loud shout of, "Way, way!" I got no news now from the capital, and wondered how things were faring; and at last an event occurred which acted like the flame to the powder train, for it set me off.

I have shown that our old river had much to do with the first change that had come over me, and, strange to say, it played a part on this occasion also.

It happened that one day, with a book in my pocket, I wandered aimlessly to the high cliffs which overlook the river close by the village, cliffs which rise to a great height and have a steep and crumbling face in which the martins build, and from the top of which there is a very fair prospect, northwards towards the old abbey, and away across into the neighbouring shire, and down stream to the level lands and wooded banks. I threw myself down and commenced reading from the book, which was a very curious one, by a Doctor Lovell of Oxford. Henry Gering had given it me, and of late I had found much of interest in it. It dealt with the views of various folk, ancient and modern, on every manner of beast, bird, fish, and insect, and at the end discoursed upon our anatomy and the cure of disease. There was much in it I could not understand, although I longed to get at the meaning of it; and I was for ever counting my ribs, and feeling the ridges on my skull, and taking stock of how my muscles lay upon my bones, while every day, with every page I read, I had a fresh disease, and made myself miserable by concocting and taking nauseous draughts, and putting great poultices upon various portions of my healthy frame. I was, however, coming to the conclusion that it would be better to do these things to others; and so I was reading eagerly of a way of curing the quinsy,—and, as I now know, a very bad way,—when from behind me I heard the thunder of hoof-strokes on turf and a wild scream of terror. I sprang up just in time to see a great strong brute of a black horse flash past me, with a young girl upon its back. The beast was mad with terror and had the bit between his teeth, while his rider was dragging at his head and was pale as death. I could do nothing, for the horse reached the cliff edge in a moment, gave a wild snort of terror, the blood-red showing in his eye, gathered his legs beneath him, and leapt clear. A moment they seemed suspended in mid air, and then, as I stared at them in horror, for I had rushed to the brink, I saw the horse's head fall forward, and the rider slip on to his neck.

Pawing the air wildly, the maddened beast, who seemed to shrink and grow smaller as he fell, went whirling through it, and near a hundred feet below me struck the river bed with a sickening thud, the girl pitching from his back into the deep current. Gathering my wits, I ran as I had never done before, and, bursting my way through briars and thickets, sped downhill, falling more than once in my mad haste, but coming to no harm beyond a scratch or two. I was at the river's bank in a few minutes, and saw, some way above me, the body floating face downwards, motionless.

It did not take me long to plunge in and bring it ashore, though I could not help thinking of the last time I had tried to do the like. She was but a lassie, I found, with long, fair curling ringlets, now massed into wet and heavy clumps, like sea-wrack which the tide has left. Her eyes were closed, and her long lashes, darker in colour than her hair, lay upon a face of deathly white, while her lips had a bluish tinge, and there was a froth upon them. I placed my hands over her heart, and found there was still a beat left in it; and she seemed in no way injured by the fall, only stunned by the shock, and half drowned.

And then it dawned upon me that I knew not what to do that she might be saved, for I had heard how drowned folk will recover. If only I did the right thing; but I was ignorant and helpless. Of what use now was my knowledge of classics and philosophy? I groaned at the thought, but set to work, first turning her on her face, then chafing her hands and loosening her tight habit.

This young life, no doubt dear to someone, was in my hands. It rested with me, under God, as to whether this flickering flame was to be fanned into vigour, or was to sputter and go out. Great beads of sweat broke forth upon me at the thought, and I worked in sore distress, but without avail. No sigh broke from the livid lips. There was no movement to tell of breath. There was nothing beyond a faint twitching of the eyelids. This horrid stillness scared me.

I was doing no good. I had failed. She would die on my hands. In a frenzy I cleared her mouth of the froth, and passed my finger to the back of her throat, but there

was no answering sign ; only there was not that chilly claminess I so much feared. And then it flashed upon me that Bill Bobolink might save her. He was an old man who had been a tarpaulin half his days, and now had come to an anchorage in St. Drynans, where he spent his time in spinning us boys yarn after yarn and displaying his treasures—a wondrous ship of Holland in a bottle that had once held Hollands, shells and eggs strung on fibre, and all manner of curios, which he had ingathered in his wanderings. I hesitated, but there was no help at hand, and I had failed. Then I sped off like an arrow for the village. Never had I run as I did then, dripping and soaked to the waist as I was. The water in my shoes squelched at every pace, but I tore along with clenched hands, and the breath coming in great sobs from between my teeth. I burst into old Bill's cottage, and gasped out my tale.

“Body o’ me,” growled Bobolink, “many a better has drowned wi’ less to do about it,” and shifted his quid.

“Damn you !” I shouted, for I was wild with fear and excitement, “get under way, or I shall drag you there by the throat.”

I think my bearing scared him, and I was twice his size. At anyrate, he came rolling out, and broke into a heavy trot. It seemed a year before we reached the place, though in reality only a few minutes had passed, but precious minutes.

“So-ho,” said old Bill, “a bonnie bit lass. I doot me, though, fresh-water Davy Jones has gotten her. Ye hae freed her mouth ; ye turned her, ye say ? So-ho, ye should hae workit her airms, ma lad, tae free her chest. See, strip her tae the waist, puir child !” and with that the old fellow, now as interested as I was, set to work, while under his directions I rubbed and chafed her limbs and beat upon her feet. Never a word did we speak for half an hour, but it was all in vain. The heart-beat had faded, and slowly a deeper pallor crept into the lassie's cheeks. There was a pinching of her face about the nose, and when one lifted the eyelid there was a dull glaze upon the eye. Another half-hour sped past, and then Bill, who was red in the face and short of breath, heaved a mighty sigh and spat upon the ground.

"She's gone," said he; "it's no manner o' use, Maister Allan. She's deid as a red herring," and he spat again.

It was little to him; he had seen death in many shapes and forms; but this was my first acquaintance with the grim destroyer, and I felt queer and half bewildered. An hour previously this thing before me had cried aloud in terror, had been tugging at her horse's head with all her force, had been a living, moving being like myself—and now? I looked, and there was nothing terrible about it, only a quietness and a coldness and a chill.

"Puir wee lassie!" I muttered; "and what now, Bill?"

"I'm for a look at the beast," quoth that worthy; "he maun hae been rarely smashed wi' siccan a fall."

I turned from him in disgust, and, reverently raising the body, bore it to the nearest house, and then turned homewards, wondering who this poor maid might be, and feeling strangely old. And yet, "so-ho," as old Bill would have said, she has long since been forgotten, although I visited the place but yesterday, and saw her grave a week ago.

CHAPTER VI

THE SWORD OF PITTENDREIGH THE GODLESS

LONG before I heard that the drowned girl was a daughter of one of the Erskines from near Melrose town, and ere the countryside was ringing with the news and flocking to the spot, my mind was made up. I fancy that I had scarce recovered from my illness, for I brooded unhealthily over the event, and taxed myself unjustly with my want of common sense and medical skill. It struck me that the knowledge of how to save life must mean power, power greater than could be won by the sword or pen, a power that might be used in many ways. I had heard of the physicians of old. I had read of the science of the Arabians, and the discoveries of the great Harvey. I recalled how the chirurgeon had bled and bullied me, and how, as I had been told, the folk at Erkinholme had hung upon his words and had gladdened or saddened at his look. Again I turned the pages of Doctor Lovell's book, and I was resolved upon my course. I would get me to Edinburgh and study medicine.

This was my main resolve, no doubt; but to me the capital meant the great world, about which I knew so little. There I should see life, and feel the throb of the nation's pulse, and perchance play a part in making history. And when I had done all this, why then, Doctor Oliphant—it sounded well—would come back to St. Drynans, and receive homage, and that proud hussy of an English lass would laugh no more at him for a beardless boy, and jeer at his rough manners and his rude ways. And he, why he would graciously pardon her, and—

“Softly, Allan,” said I to myself; “these are but castles in the air; and what of Henry Gering, and, for that matter, what of the monies which must be spent?”

I had not thought of this before, and it took some time to summon courage enough to tell my father of my decision and ask his aid. But John Oliphant would have none of this folly, as he termed it.

"Are you mad, sir?" said he, "when, by helping me, you will win fame and riches, such as no poor lancet-monger ever dreamed of. Not a step do you go with my consent, and not a bodle do you get from me."

"Then I will even go without," I answered coolly.

"You fool!" he cried, "what do you know of the world's ways?"

"I shall never learn here," I retorted.

He waved his hand impatiently.

"You will starve and die like a dog in the gutter. You are flying in the face of Providence, and, listen to me, Allan, the day you do this thing, that day I leave your brother David our house and lands; for there is no entail, mark you."

He thought to cow me by this threat, but I was stubborn.

"I have no wish to grieve you, sir," said I, "but my mind is made up, and I shall get no peace till I carry out my plan."

He saw it was hopeless to argue, and turned his back on me.

"Very well," said he, "you are either a genius or a fool, and genius reads the same as madman to my mind; only do not come whining to me for a crust or a bone when your ribs are showing and your belly is empty."

"I am not likely to, sir," I answered hotly, "and I go on the morrow."

"To the devil," said he, but I kept silent.

That night, when he had taken the Book, he read very solemnly the first part of the parable of the prodigal, and that text which bids a young man rejoice in his way, and warns him of evil to come; and a great hush fell upon us all, till my mother came running to me with a cry, and threw her arms about my neck, but said not a word.

It was a sore ordeal, but I braved it; and perhaps I was helped by what seemed to me a sparkle of approval in Dorothy's grey eyes, though, to my surprise, I saw her

turn pale as though afraid when she heard I was bound for Edinburgh.

That night my mother came to my room, and talked with me long and earnestly. She did not blame me, for she was a woman of high courage, and, as I have said, she understood me. What passed between us is sacred and cannot be written here, though it cheered me greatly; and at the end she placed a ring of gold in my hand.

"See, laddie," she said, "there is the Cameron's ring o' luck. It has ever brocht oor side gude fortune, and guard it weel, Allan, my son."

I looked at the gift curiously. It was very massive, broadened at one part like a signet, and stamped in black with a closed hand and dagger.

"But it is yours, mother," I said, "and what about your luck?"

"No, no, laddie, the ring is a man's ring, and goes wi' the son o' the hoose; and, as ye ken, there is no' a Cameron o' the male line left, though that's no' the ring's fault; so tak' it and welcome, and this beside," and she put a silk purse with a few pieces of gold in my hand.

"Look you," I answered, "the ring I'll take gladly, but no money. I have some of my own, enough to serve till I make more, as I shall do, never fear."

She reasoned with me, but found me firm, though I did not tell her that I had not much more than the price of a pair of shoes. Still, I knew that she could ill spare aught of what my father gave her, and I was not going to be beholden to anyone. And after she had made me promise to write her often, and to come back as soon as might be, she left me with her blessing and the print of her lips upon my brow; and I little thought of all that should come to pass ere I saw her comely face again.

I had not had a chance of bidding Mistress Dorothy adieu, but I put the thought of her out of my mind, though it cost me such a struggle to do so that I forgot to say farewell to Mat Kerr. The old servitor, however, had not forgotten me. I woke with the first cock crow, and looked forth from the casement, and perhaps my heart was throbbing a little more quickly than was its wont. It was an early summer's day in the year '14, and from my window

far up in the keep wall I could see the grey dawn streaks in the east, and I felt the morning air fresh and chill, as if it had been wafted from the lone north sea. A great love of the old place rose within me, and I softly climbed the narrow stair which led upwards to the battlements. There I stood bareheaded, a hundred memories chasing through my mind. A grey mist seemed to clothe the countryside, but away across the river it was lighter, and I could see dimly the outline of woods and braes in the fair shire of Berwick. To the north and east loomed the triple shadow of the Eildons, and as I gazed at the bonnie land I knew so well, and which I might never see again, a great sadness took hold upon me.

"Whoo-ee, whoo-ee, whoo-ee," a whaup's whistle, long-drawn and plaintive, shrilled on my ear, quavering into rapid notes and dying away, as the lone bird of the moors flapped upwards from his night's resting-place. And then again rang out our old cock's challenge to the sun, and the light brightened in the east. It was time I was on the march. I slipped back into my chamber, and was not long making up my pack. A change of linen and of shoes, a Bible given me by my mother in happier days, Doctor Lovell's precious book, and a few odds and ends formed all my scanty gear. I had no weapon save a thick holly staff I had cut, but it would serve at a pinch; and so, half sad, half elated, I turned my back on my old home and set my face towards the north. But I had not gone far ere a voice called me, and presently I saw old Mat's burly figure hastening on my track. My heart upbraided me for having forgot to give him a hand-grip, and I waited for him.

"Sae ye would hae won clear without sae muckle as a fare-thee-weel, Maister Allan?" said the old man mournfully.

"Ye'll forgie me, Mat," I said hoarsely, speaking in homely broad Scots, "but I hae had ma fill o' greetin'."

"Ay, ay," quoth he, "I ken fine wha ye were thinkin' o', lad, and it's no' for me tae blame ye; but I wad bid ye God speed, and aye mind ye are for the Kirk and your ain haund. I'm no' feared for ye, for your back's braid eneuch tae stand a' it's likely tae get tae bear; but ye hae no weepion, and sae I brocht ye this gude blade," and with that he put into my hands the second of his two broadswords.

"But, Mat," said I, "this is your own."

"No' it," he answered; "but see, Maister Allan, I'll go a mile wi' ye on the road gin ye like, and tell ye the tale o' this auld bit o' steel."

Without waiting for an answer, and, indeed, I was glad of his company, he began striding along beside me; and this, in brief, is the tale he told.

It happened one night over thirty years before, that he had been sentinel for an assembly of the hill-folk and outlawed men, away in the wilds of wester Dumfries, when, apparently from out of the heather before him, appeared the figure of a man.

"A step, and ye're deid as mutton!" Mat Kerr had roared, startled at the sudden apparition; but the stranger had merely taken a huge snuff-box from his fob.

"It's a fine nicht for the time o' year," said he; "will ye titillate your nose, good sir?" and he proffered his box to Mat.

The latter, however, kept his piece at the present, and glowered at him from over its stock.

"In the name o' God," he cried, not sure but that this was the Evil One himself, "in the name o' God, state your business and be gone!"

"By my marrow bones," said the stranger, "but ye are a richt gude watch-dog; howbeit, it may please ye to ken that a troop o' fourscore dragoons, led by Ogilvy of Dare, are on your scent; and as I am ever for the weaker party, be it what it will, I hae brocht ye the news and the use o' my blade here."

"And wi' that," said Mat, "he whippit oot the verra bit o' steel ye hae noo at your belt, Maister Allan."

"And was his warning a true one?" I asked.

"Ay, that it was; and, thanks to him, we beat back the troopers, for siccan a wee deil for a fecht I niver saw. He was a wee bit body aboot middle age, but a' covered wi' scars. I can tell ye his breest was a sicht, and he was the maist comical-tongued creetur ye iver knew. He stayed wi' us for a while, by way o' experience, as he said; but he verra sune showed us he hadna the root o' the matter in him. He didna care a buckie, as he said, aboot ane side or the ither, and he won for himsel' the name o' Pittendreigh the Godless; for, mind ye, he was amongst

the maist stern Whigs o' the west country, where a mon wha swore mair than thrice in the day was accounted a child o' Satan, and this Pittendreigh was gey free wi' his tongue. He was free wi' his siller too, while it lasted, and sae they put up wi' him; but when that was come tae an end they gied him notice tae quit.

"'Wi' plesure, gentlemen,' he said, 'for ye are mighty musty hereabouts, and there seems tae be nae mair experience tae be gotten frae ye.' And then he verra solemnly shook ivery mon o' us by the haund, and aifter he had mounted his beast he kissed his fingers tae us.

"'We shall meet in heaven,' he cried, 'if as muckle as ane o' ye gets there, whilk I sair misdoobt'; and while we stood and gaped at him, he was gone. Aifterwards I foond he had left me his sword wi' a bit o' writin', in which he telt me, 'I had some o' the auld leaven in me, and didna swoon at the smell o' strong waters'; but," said old Mat, "that was but his jest, ye ken, Maister Allan, for I was sort o' friendly wi' the creetur, ay, and I hac scarce had a gude lauch syne he left."

"Hae ye never seen him since then, Mat?" I asked.

"No, lad; and he maun be a gey auld mon by this time gin he's alive, which I shouldna wonder gin he was, for he had as muckle life in him as a wull cat. Mony's the time I've put up a prayer for Adam Pittendreigh, for I niver saw a mon I likit as weel. But noo I maun awa' back, for the hens is tac feed, forbye the parritch tae mak'; sae God be wi' ye, Maister Allan, and dinna forget in a fecht tae watch a mon's een and no' his haunds."

"Good-bye, auld freend," said I, "and I thank ye for the sword"; and then, with a firm hand-grip, we parted, and I stood and watched the bowed figure of the old blue-bonnet as he shuffled back to the house which was to know me no more for many a long day. I started off again, thinking on the story I had heard, and it was very plain to me, as I had half guessed before, that Mat had not been by any means the sternest of that stern band, though later troubles had sobered and perhaps soured him a little.

And now, perchance, it may be fitting for an old man like me to tell what kind of youth this was who was plodding along the Melrose road so early in the morning.

I have said enough about my character, which was a few degrees worse than my outer man; for in those days I was a big, strong fellow, carrying my six feet well, and broad and burly to boot. I had my hair clubbed on the nape of my neck, and fastened by a ribbon, which, alas! was not Mistress Dorothy's, and I was very young in the face. Indeed, an old wife of our village had once spent her wit upon me, saying, I "lookit thirteen frae the front, and thirty frae ahint"; and I fancy she was near the mark. For all that, I was well enough favoured, and was soberly clad in a suit of russet brown, with hose to match, while I had a trimming of lace on my three-cornered hat of felt, and wore no wig. I had my pack slung on my staff over my shoulder, and the great broadsword must have seemed out of keeping with the rest of my peaceful get-up, though I did not think so at the time.

It would serve no purpose to tell how I tramped steadily by Gala and Heriot waters, and what I thought about; suffice to say the day was very hot, and, having broken my fast twice on some provender I carried with me, I fell asleep by the roadside and lost a good hour. Moreover, I lost my way, and thus the night was drawing on apace when I crowned a ridge and saw away before me a long line of twinkling lights which seemed to hang suspended in the air.

I was footsore and weary, and very lonely beside, and so I sat me down on a convenient bank and stared at the yellow gleams.

My mind was very busy, for I knew that I looked for the first time on that city which had ever been as a loadstar to me, that old, grey, romantic town wherein two-thirds of my country's history had passed, that place where I hoped to reach fame and learning, as many a poor wayfarer had done before me, and has done, and will do, after me; and as I looked there came faintly to my ears the blare of a trumpet, and then the tolling of a heavy bell, and light after light vanished, leaving nothing but the outline of a long, sloping ridge with, away to the eastward, a huge, dark mass, which I knew to be the crags and the lion hill.

Of a sudden it struck me that there were such things as city walls and gates, and that if I tarried longer upon the road I might have to make my bed there. I jumped up,

and as I did so I heard a noise near me, and then, coming up the hill, I made out the figure of a man leading a horse by the bridle.

He was soon abreast of me, and swore a great oath as he looked towards the city; and I fancied I had never heard so repellent a voice, for it was cracked and harsh, as if a very old woman spoke through a man's throat.

"Here is a nice mess, sir," he said, turning to me, "a pretty pass; the gates shut, and devil a chance of entering without the password; but perchance you know it?"

I confessed my ignorance, and he swore again, and then took hold of his chin with his hand and stood still in thought.

Presently he roused himself.

"We seem to be companions in trouble," he said more cheerily, though he could not rid his voice of its unpleasant grating sound.

"I did not say I was going townwards," I answered, thinking myself very clever in thus not telling him over-much.

"No," he said sharply, "but you are, all the same."

I made no reply, and he gave a kind of chuckle, while I tried to make out what manner of man this was; but the darkness foiled me.

"Have you come far this day?" he asked.

"From St. Drynans," I answered, seeing no harm in telling him the whole truth, and not wishing to appear proud or churlish.

He seemed to start at my words, but no doubt this was due to the restlessness of his horse, from whose heaving sides a cloud of vapour was rising and showing whitish against the black of night.

"Indeed," said he, "I doubt not a longish tramp. But look you, young sir, I know of a fair hostel in a hollow hard by. So what say you; shall we look up mine host?"

Having no better plan, I assented, and we descended the slope towards the town, he still leading his horse, and then, turning off along a bypath to the left, we reached a small house, thatched and whitewashed, from one window of which a ray of welcome light shot out across the road. A shock-headed boy appeared at the sound of our approach

and took charge of the horse, the stranger keeping very much in the shadow, and telling me to enter and he would follow. I felt a trifle uneasy, for there was something curious about the man; but I had nothing left for it but to go in, though I was glad now I had the sword with me as well as the holly cudgel. The doorway opened directly upon a low-roofed room, from the rafters of which hung half a score of smoked hams, the smell of which pervaded the whole place but was not unpleasant. A great fire roared and crackled up a wide chimney, and was flanked by a seat on either side, forming a mightily cosy ingle neuk; for though the day had been hot, the night was a trifle chilly. A greasy-looking man, with a bald pate and fat cheeks veined with red, who was the only occupant, rose as I entered and gruffly bade me a "gude-even." I took him to be the host, and such he proved, for he asked me for my orders civilly enough, and told me I might have a bed and welcome, though he seemed not best pleased when he found I meant to sup solely on porridge and milk. At that moment my companion entered, and for the first time I had a good look at him. There seemed to me to be something vague about the man as well as curious, for his face was very expressionless, the only points that caught the eye being the coal black colour of his hair, his dark eyebrows, and a black patch which covered half his chin. His eyes, his cheeks, even his lips were almost colourless, as seen by the lamplight, and I felt that as far as his features went I might pass him on the morrow and never know him. He was of a very ordinary size also, and as he wore a long black cloak I could make nothing of his figure, while his feet and legs were cased in brown riding-boots, which carried heavy and rusted spurs. He nodded carelessly to the landlord, and went straight over to the fire, where he stood with his back to me, warming his hands, and making a noise as though he were rubbing down a horse. Thus he stood till a serving-maid, dirty and down at heels, had spread the deal table with a plenteous repast, and he only turned about when she swung an iron pot over the flames, and began to prepare my supper. Then, without removing his cloak, he took his seat at the board and looked about him.

"You will join me, sir, I trust?" he said very courteously,

though the harshness of his voice made his request seem almost a command. I hesitated, for though I was hungry yet I did not care to lay myself under an obligation to this stranger, and my slender store of coin would not permit me to stay my stomach with anything like ample or dainty fare.

"Well," said I, "I am beholden to you, but my supper is ordered, and"—

"Is not enough for a well-grown youth," he broke in. "Frankly, sir, I shall be glad of the company of"—

He paused and drummed upon the table with his forefinger.

"My name is Oliphant," I said.

"So," he replied, and I saw his eyebrows, which were near as black as his hair, lift a little, "so; a good border name, I believe, and not unknown in England, whence I come."

This confidence on his part in some way prevented my asking his name in return, so I only bowed and sat down opposite him. Once he began eating he stopped his converse, and we finished in silence; only I thought he gave a faint chuckle as I lowered my head for a second and muttered a grace. I looked sharply at him, but he was as solemn as any owl, and had begun picking his teeth with a tiny silver dagger. When he had made an end he drew out a long pipe from under his cloak and offered me some of the weed, but I shook my head.

"Ah," said he, "you will never learn younger to know the charms of this evil habit, hee hee," and with that some of the smoke got into his windpipe, and he began to cough very forcibly.

"Well, Master Oliphant," he said at length, "I will warrant me you have no objection to a mug of ale, hot and spiced, such as the 'Magpie' here is famed for?"

Now I had been content with water all my life, but, not wishing to appear a child, I thanked him, though I grew a trifle red under his pale bluish eye. All the same I found the drink very comforting, and it quickly loosened my tongue, so that ere long I found myself chatting very freely with this stranger, though he chiefly played the part of listener, and nodded and put in a word now and then. In

less than no time my mug was empty and filled again, but I chattered on, telling him about my life at Erkinholme and old Mat Kerr, and finding him full of interest and sympathy. Let it not be thought that I was so far left to myself as to tell him everything. I said not a word concerning Dorothy or my reason for leaving home, for, even though I spoke freely, I had a kind of distrust of this man. Once indeed he asked me what a gay young dog like myself did for maids' society in such a place, but I affected not to hear him, and called upon mine host to fill my tankard again. Very soon I grew drowsy and confused, the face of the man opposite me began to swell to an enormous size, and then to shrink to nothing, and then, horror of horrors! he had two evil faces, which grinned and leered at me, but at last grew misty and melted away. My head nodded of its own accord, I felt a glorious warmth within and around me, my eyelids grew weighty as lead, I breathed heavily and deeply, and, with my head cradled on my arms, I sunk into oblivion.

CHAPTER VII

THE INN OF THE WHITE HORSE, AND THE MAN WHO CAUGHT FLIES

A VOICE shouting in my ear and a straw tickling my nose brought me to my senses the following morning, and I found that both these good offices had been performed by mine host of the "Magpie," who, by daylight, looked very filthy and out at elbows.

At first, however, I was more concerned with myself, for my head felt full and I had a dull pain across my eyes, while my mouth had a taste in it as though I had been sucking copper coins. I was still sitting at the table, but my horseman of the previous night was gone. Gradually it dawned upon me that I had been very drunk, and a feeling of shame took hold of me, quickly followed by one of alarm, for I found my coat open, and on plunging my hand into its inner pocket, I discovered my money had vanished. With a cry of rage I sprang to my feet, sobered all at once, and began to search every pouch in my clothing, while the landlord looked on, with a sort of dismayed grin upon his sleek countenance.

I searched and better searched, but all I found was the ring o' luck, save the mark ! which I had hid away in the lining of my under-vest, a half-dozen coppers and a silver piece, which would scarce buy me a breakfast. My sword and holly staff remained, but my pack and its contents were gone, all save the Bible, which lay open before me, with a mark upon the margin, opposite which I read, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from trouble." A little farther on there was a piece of cloth between the leaves, and, turning to the place, which was also in the Proverbs, I found the first and eighth verses of the 27th, and the twenty-second verse of the 28th chapter, marked

for my benefit; and I fear I thought but little of the third commandment for the space of five minutes.

"That villain has robbed me," I shouted, turning to mine host.

He merely nodded, as if that was nothing wonderful.

"Do you know aught about him?" I cried fiercely.

"Not I," he said; "and look ye, be a trifle more civil with your tongue, my young sir; your bed is not paid for."

"But," said I, in sore distress, "I have no money."

"That is no business of mine," he answered, in a bullying tone; "it is not my fault if ye are a fool, hob-nobbing with any Jock-o'-the-road ye come across. Pay me my just charge, or to the Tolbooth ye go, my young ruffler."

He had gone a little too far, however, for in a trice I had set my sword-point to his paunch.

"Now, you fat rogue," I cried, "I believe you had a hand in this."

His flabby face had turned very white, and his thick lips kept trying to mumble out something, but in his fear he had lost his voice.

"Nevertheless," I said, with a grand air, "I am an honest man. There is a hat worth twice the bed which I have never slept in," and I pointed to my headpiece, which hung upon a peg; "I will leave you that in payment. And now no more of your threats, or you will have no use for a hat for some time to come," and with that I drove my sword back into its sheath, and, picking up my staff and Bible, stalked out like a colonel of horse.

"Sir, sir," shouted the rascal, "you shall have your breakfast if you will," but I merely turned and shook my cudgel at him, and then took my way downhill.

"This was a nice beginning," I thought; "hat, money, and clothes all gone, in exchange for a supper, a drunken sleep, and a chance acquaintance."

"Well," said I, "please the Lord, I meet this villain in the town, and then, Tolbooth or no Tolbooth, I shall take the clothes from him, but in a different fashion," and with this worthy vow I stood still and gazed at the city.

It was about nine of the clock, for I had slumbered long, and the sun had been up and busy for hours, and now he was lighting up a thousand lums and gable ends. Blue

wreaths of reek curled lazily up into the air, and drifted about the church spires, which towered above the other buildings. I marked the castle, squatting low upon the great rock at the westmost end of the long ridge, which was covered with houses of every size and shape, whose windows now and again flashed in the early rays.

So clear was the atmosphere that, though I was over a mile away, I could see all this very plainly; and then, with a single glance, I took in the great hill and the plain around, and far away on my right the waters of the Firth, against which stood out a long row of thin and scraggy trees, seemingly growing by the seashore. The scent of fresh-turned earth was in my nostrils, and the wild roses were all abloom in the hedgerows beside me, and so with an effort I shook off my melancholy and made for the town, though I was deeply grieved at the loss of Doctor Lovell's book, nor could I conceive what the stranger wanted with such a tome.

I entered the city by way of the Pleasance, a place well named, for here are houses of good repute, with very fine gardens and orchards and pleasant walks winding about the hillsides, under shade of trees and bushes.

I passed through two gates, and was jeered at for my bare head by a rogue of the gutter, in a coat reaching to his heels and turned up at the cuffs. He fled, however, when I made as though to chase him, and in a short time, turning to the left in the Cowgate valley, and passing up a steep wynd, I found myself in the High Street. And such a street!

Nowhere on God's earth could one find such houses, climbing skywards, set with narrow windows, and crowned with tiles and long chimneys, and with rooms set in the roof midway between the ridges and the eaves. Poles with ropes, some bearing dirty clouts and some clean ones, jutted out from them, and women shrieked their morning news from land to land. And all this built on the slope of a ridge, so that one wondered how the whole place did not go sliding and slipping to perdition. The street was paved with large, rounded stones, which at the sides were splashed and wetted by dirty water thrown from above, that trickled slowly into the runnel.

I stared with much interest at the booths and shops, but with still more at the folk, who, even at this early hour, thronged the highway. Here and there a night reveller went staggering homewards, and I thought shame of him, till I remembered how I had spent my time. Portly citizens in heavy wigs and full-skirted coats tapped their several ways with long and tasselled canes, or stood deep in converse in the middle of the road, while mongrel dogs smelled and whined about their heels.

Red-faced women with raucous voices, queer striped dresses, and scaly creels, bawled the morning's catch or bartered at the doors. Bare-legged laddies played games at every close mouth, till their ears were cuffed by the attendants of some dainty dame, who tripped it haughtily, with her dress tucked up to show her flounced and flowered petticoats. My eyes grew big with astonishment at all this, though, at the same time, I could have wished my nose were smaller or not so keen, for very foul odours were wafted to me from garbage heaps and the doors of cellars.

Slowly I took my way down the street, once or twice running into passengers, who swore at me, or craved my pardon, while others looked after me and smiled; for what with my bare head, great sword, and stains of travel, I must have been a strange-looking figure enough. As I neared the gate called the Netherbow, which arches across the street and separates it from the Canongate, six men, marching three abreast, all clad in red coats, and with shoulder straps and great axes, swept through it at a quick march, and passed me on their way uphill. From my father's description, I knew these were the men of the city guard, mostly old Highlanders, hated by the townsfolk and returning the hate with interest. Scarce had they gone when a courier on a foam-flecked horse, and with a look of great importance, rode by at a heavy trot, his saddle bags swinging on either side, and his shoulders hunched with weariness.

A group of folk were gathered at the gate round a woman who was selling shell-fish and cracking coarse jokes, though I could scarce make out what she said.

All this is familiar to me now, and became so long since, but then I marvelled at the commonest sight, and fell agaping at a water-carrier or a soldier.

Down the long Canongate I wandered, my head full of tales I had heard concerning it, till I found the morning air had made me hungry, and I cast about for a place where I might get rid of a copper or two. Soon at the head of a close, not far from what I was told was the Watergate, I saw an inn sign, bearing the picture of a white horse, though it was but a sorry beast, and I remembered that my father had been wont to stable here when in town on matters of law. I had no idea that this was one of the chief hostels of the city, otherwise I might have thought twice of venturing within its precincts. As it was, I strode in boldly enough, and found myself in an ill-paved yard, with before me the tavern itself, a long, low building, with a projecting upper storey and a roof alive with pigeons. I pushed the green door open, and as it was a fresh, breezy morning, a gust of wind blown through the close swept past me, and I was straightway greeted by a volley of very curious language, which, though meant as such, could scarce be called oaths.

“By Aaron’s beard which budded,” shouted a voice, “was there ever such an untimely fool? By my marrow bones, but that is the third I have missed this morning, and all owing to that blasted blast of blustering—a very fair alliteration, sir, I think?”

A table faced the door, and on the other side of it was the person who delivered himself of this strange oration, and he was as strange as his speech. He was a slight-built, very dapper old man, whose age might have been anything from sixty to a hundred. He wore a periwig, carefully curled, but all on one side of his head; so that on the other side I could see his natural thatch, which was silvery grey and very plentiful, and very well brushed back behind his ear.

His eyes, which were of no particular colour, kept shifting all over me, as if afraid to meet mine, while he seemed to have a very neat nose, and certainly had a tinge of colour in his cheeks, which were covered with small, whitish scars. His mouth spoke of humour. It was thin-lipped, and the under-lip pouted ever so slightly beyond the upper, so as to give him the appearance of being always about to make a jest or tell a funny tale. His chin was sharp, and at

each jaw angle he had a little tuft of white and pepper coloured hair, which somehow exactly suited his countenance.

His coat fitted him like a glove, and was of a dark blue colour, with silver lace and silver buttons, and he had a white waistcoat with flapped pockets, and some sort of device all over it.

This singular old gentleman kept squinting at me for a moment, and then, with a buzz, a great bluebottle fly landed close to some sticky mess on the table.

"Gently, my winged beauty," said he, in a voice which had a curious burr, such as folks have who hail from Berwick, "gently," and with that his hand crept towards the hapless insect, and I noticed he had only the thumb and the last two fingers of it remaining. With a little rush he cleverly caught the fly, held it a moment between the thumb and forefinger of the other hand, and then let it go with such an air of pride and gratification that I could not refrain from smiling at him.

"That makes the twenty-first," said he; "my hand has not lost its cunning. And now, what have we here?"

With that he darted a very keen look at me, half shutting one eye and holding his chin in his hand.

"A stranger," he shouted, "yea, I say unto you, and more than a stranger,—a country loon, no less; a David, though a big one, with the sword of Goliath: such a fellow as I have never seen before," and then he whipped out a huge watch and set it before him.

"We have, sir," he said, "one hour and twenty minutes; what can I show you? The castle, a noble fortress; our palace of Holyrood,—between you and me, sir, a ramshackle affair,—or perchance"—and so he rattled away, while I wondered if I had stumbled upon a madman, and felt indignant at his insolence; for a drawer who was cleaning bottles in a corner was shaking with mirth.

"Well, sir," said he, "what do you wish?"

"I wish," said I, "that I could see you hanged. for that alone, it seems to me, would keep your tongue quiet."

To my surprise, he was not a whit offended.

"You are in error, young man, I fear," he said; "for methinks I have read somewhere of psalms and tunes and heavenly songs, and I would look very well in a halo of

that, I am convinced. But come, you have stared long enough at me ; what do you take me for ?”

“Egad,” I answered, “I doubt whether you are a wit or a villain.”

“Most excellent,” said he, “though, mark you, not original ; for half a score have said I am a witty villain, and another half-score that I have a villainous wit. Do you take me, sir, do you take me ?”

He looked at me with the manner of a little pert bird, and so comical did he seem that I there and then gave vent to my mirth.

“By my marrow bones,” said he, and I wondered where I had heard that expression before, “I like you, my lad ; your laugh sounds honest, but a trifle dry. Here, fellow, a pint of your very good claret.”

The drawer, who seemed used to the vagaries of this queer man, merely shook his head.

At this the old fellow was on his feet in an instant, and I saw he was small in stature though very elegantly made, and that he carried a rapier in a red velvet sheath. He danced about in a fury, pouring out strings of texts all mixed together, but mightily appropriate, oaths, and a babel of broad Scotch and the best English, till I gazed at him aghast.

“Am I not sufficiently weel kenned here, ye lazy deil ?” he shouted.

“Ay, ay,” retorted the man coolly, “ye’re verra weel kenned, but ye see the colour o’ your money isna. Why, mon, yon last glass is no’ paid for.”

“Think of it, sir,” said the little man in a tragic voice, turning to me ; “I honour this miserable hovel with my patronage, and they will give me no credit, and grudge me a look at their wishy-washy, watery wine. There is another alliteration for you, sir.”

I did not know what to think of this stranger, with his fine clothes and empty pockets, his oaths and Scripture texts, his jumble of tongues and alliterations, his humour and his passion, but for all that I liked him ; and very rashly, considering my resources, I begged leave to pay for the claret, and he very graciously consented, placing one hand upon his heart and bowing low.

I found I had just sufficient to pay for the wine, which, if I remember aright, was neither very good nor very bad, but was a trifle sour, and so proved grateful to my parched throat.

When we had finished, my companion drew a small bag of cloth from under the skirt of his coat, and produced from it a hand-glass and comb. He ran the latter through his wig once or twice, set that article straight upon his head, and put his little tufts of hair in order; then, picking up a gold-headed cane, which I had not noticed before, he lifted the top from it, displaying a tiny cavity for snuff, which he proffered to me. I shook my head, and he sighed and took a pinch himself in the most dainty fashion imaginable, afterwards flecking away a few spilled grains with a handkerchief of the finest cambric, all lace at the edges, and with a delicate aroma of scent.

"Now, sir," he said, "clap on your hat, and we shall sally forth."

"My hat?" I stammered; "unfortunately, it is lost."

"Lost!" he cried, and then pirouetted round upon one heel.

"Fellow," he shouted to the drawer, "did I not make you a present of a very good hat of mine some six months since?"

The man nodded sullenly, as if he knew what was coming.

"Then fetch it, sir; this gentleman's necessity is greater than thine, for he is to walk with me to the Bristo Port this morning; and besides," he added, dropping his voice, "you are an insolent knave."

"A present is a present," said the man gruffly.

"I will give you a present of a hole in your hide, fellow, if you do not fetch my very good hat, which must be sick of your greasy pow."

"Nay, nay, sir," I broke in, "I can do well enough without a hat," and indeed I did not fancy wearing this ancient headpiece, which had already done double service.

"So be it, so be it," he answered; "and, by the way," he continued, cocking his head on one side, "I do not think I have had the experience of walking with a bare-headed gentleman through the city. Are you acquaint with the Latin, sir?"

“I have that good fortune.”

“Then, sir, you are no doubt aware that *experientia docet*, so, by the right, quick march,” and off he strutted with a very springy step, while I strode beside him choking with laughter, though my breakfast lay behind me at the inn.

Never in all my days have I had, or will I have, such a promenade. In the first place, scarce had we got upon the street when a dozen bairns, bare-legged and bare-headed, caught sight of us and came charging for us, with expectation in their eyes, shouting with merriment, and holding out their grimy paws.

The little man stopped, and, with his cane fixed between his fingers, spread out his hands with a hopeless gesture, and the children sped away again with a babel of noise.

My companion vouchsafed no explanation of this performance, but fell to telling me his reason for catching flies, which, according to him, was to keep his hand in play and his two fingers supple.

“A very excellent method,” he said, “with something of sport in it,” and then he stopped, and pointed with his cane at a great, gloomy building. “A place of tragedy,” said he. “That, sir, is the house of Queensberry; do you know the tale?”

I shook my head.

“The late earl,” said he, “was a rogue. He was heavily bribed for advancing the Treaty of Union, and the day on which the measure passed, sir, he came home to that house, and what think you he found?”

Again I shook my head.

“He found, sir, that his idiot son, a creature seven feet high, and for all the world like a hobgoblin, had broken loose from that room with the boards at the window. He roamed through the house, and in the kitchen came upon a wee laddie tending the roast against my lord’s home-coming. What does he do but whip off the meat, kills and spits the kitchen boy, and has him half roasted when they found him. If that is not God’s curse I ask you what is, sir?”

I listened with horror to this terrible tale, which, as no doubt you know, is true enough; but all the same I could scarce keep my gravity at my companion’s odd gestures and burring speech.

“Is the creature still there?” I asked.

“Not he ; he’s in England for his sins, and another reigns in his stead. But you’ll bore a hole in the boards, sir, if you stare at them like that. Give you good-day,” he went on, saluting a passer-by.

Indeed the whole way up the street he kept recognising people, and greeted them by bringing the forefinger of his left hand to his forehead and then sharply lowering it. I noticed that half these folk did not return his salutation, but he did not seem to mind, and kept pointing me out houses of interest, with coats of arms and inscriptions on the architraves, while old blear-eyed hags curtseyed to him, and he struck at little urchins and the town *caddies* with his cane.

At the Netherbow he had some great joke with the gate-keeper, which I could not understand, and he told me the history of the old and ugly wife who was selling the shell-fish, and who, according to him, had been as bonnie a lass as you could meet on a Sabbath day’s journey.

“There,” said he, a moment later, “is the house of my worthy friend, John Knox.”

“Your worthy friend !” I cried ; “ why, he has been dead these hundred years and more.”

“To be sure, to be sure,” he said ; “ I shall show you whereabouts he lies in what was once St. Giles’ Kirkyard. But you will find, young sir, that your best friends are those who died before you were born ; they may turn in their graves, as I doubt not worthy John has turned many a time, but they can’t turn on you like your present cronies. Yonder goes a rascal in case, who owes me two crowns,” he roared, and darted at a great hulking man who was shambling down the street.

But the fellow saw him coming, and took to his heels in terror, vanishing down a narrow close, while the queer mortal whom by good luck I had fallen in with came back swearing and chuckling.

On we marched, and he pointed out St. Giles his kirk and the Parliament Square, and had a tale about every wynd and dirty stair.

“Now, sir,” he said, “we will by the West Bow and the Grassmarket, for I lodge in the suburbs in the summer, though my hiberna or winter quarters are in the Lawnmarket yonder,” and he pointed to the vastly tall dwellings which ran upwards towards the castle hill.

“You see,” he went on, “I am of a delicate constitution, and the harsh air from the Borough loch does not suit me in November. It catches me upon the lungs and tickles the throttle.”

We proceeded down the West Bow, a narrow street with a sharp bend, and he showed me the Wizard’s house, and vowed he had seen his ghost on two several occasions; and then again he suddenly took to his heels, and I after him, for a tall woman, very well got up and followed by a coloured boy carrying a lap dog, came hurrying across the street towards him with threatening gestures. He did not stop till half-way up the Row of the Candlemakers, where he told me that he had been a suitor for this lady’s hand ten years before, and had in some way offended her. Afterwards I found he had not been able to resist the temptation of catching a fly which had settled on her back hair, and he had caught both fly and hair, and now would be in a bad way if her ladyship caught him, for, as he said—

“Jane Urquhart is a vixen, though her purse is well lined and her tongue sharp. D’ye ken, she dragged puir Geordie Geddes by the lug frae the top o’ the Bow to the Tolbooth, and a’ because his crooked stick caught in her petticoat. Guid save us, but I escapit frae her, even as a bird oot o’ the fowler’s snare.”

At last, after he had showed me the gates of the old kirkyard, and investigated a rubbish heap at the head of the Row, we reached a small, mean house close by the city wall, and, climbing a creaking wooden stair, we entered an attic room, all roof-beams and angles, with the words *experientia docet* carved over the door. He waved me in with the air of a prince, and bade me ease myself of my staff and sword.

I threw them both on the table, which had but three sound legs, and at once my new friend darted forward and snatched up the latter.

“Where got ye this, boy?” he cried, for the first time in earnest since I had seen him; but at that moment a light dawned upon me.

“God bless me,” I shouted, “you are, you must be”—

“I am”—

“Pittendreigh the Godless,” we roared together.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SHOP OF THE APOTHECARY, AND THE ROOM OF THE DEAD

SO astonished was I at having encountered Mat Kerr's old comrade in arms that I straightway collapsed into a chair, which promptly gave way beneath me; and there I sat amongst the ruins, while Pittendreigh examined his blade, whistling or shaking his head as he saw some landmark in its history.

"But," said he at length, "you have never told me how you came by it."

"I got it from our servitor, old Mat Kerr, at Erkinholme," I replied.

"What!" he cried, "is auld Mat in the flesh? By my marrow bones, his stomach lining must be leather and his throat of brass, for such a braw lad to swill his liquor I never did see. And does he still keep fondly to it?"

"Whiles he exceeds, I must allow."

"Exceeds! ye mean it dottles his brain? Ah me! then Mat is not the man he once was. But who may you be, sir?"

I told him my name, and he grew very curious; for it seems he knew all about my father and his bickerings at law.

"John Oliphant! bless me, we aye called him the game cock. Does he still speak like this?" and he mimicked my father to the life.

"Ay, ay, you speak the truth, young sir; but sit ye down. Guid sakes, the only chair has gone! Well, there is the table. And now tell me the whole tale frae Alpha to Omega."

Thereupon I proceeded to tell him as much as I deemed wise, while, without a word of apology, he stripped off all his gay feathers, and got into an old frayed suit, such as he might have worn when he served for the Covenant, pitching

his wig on to his bed, which was set in a recess in the wall, and folding away his clothes very carefully in a great wooden box.

“‘Waste not, want not’ is a very good saw, and very fair alliteration of its kind,” said he. “And so you would study medicine, my young sir? Well, I tried it myself, for experience, ye ken, but I was too delicate for the work. I vow I had no idea we were so horrible within; it kept me to bread and milk for a week. But what may your plans be?”

I told him I had neither plans nor money.

“Whew!” said he, “this will never do. What the deil d’ye mean buying claret before twelve of the clock? Not a word, sir, not a word. Ye’re a daft callant, and will come to the gallows as sure’s my name is Adam; and that minds me of a very good tale, if ye care to hear it.”

I expressed my willingness.

“I don’t believe it,” he cried, “I don’t believe it. But anyway, ye saw that woman, Jane Urquhart? weel, she’s shairp wi’ her unruly member, but no’ a patch on her auld mither, wha’s deid these thirty years. Ye see I was accounted something oot o’ common when I was your age, for mair than one reason and no without reason; and one day my fayther, honest man, went to pay his respects to Granny Urquhart. In she cam’ tae see him, not knowing him frae Cain.

“‘Ye’ll ken me, Mistress Urquhart?’ he began, ‘I’m Adam’s fayther.’

“‘Deed, then,’ said she, ‘ye maun be a gey auld mon,’ which so took him aback that he clean forgot tae ask for the loan o’ her siller spoons, and got his ears weel boxed by my mither when he cam’ hame.”

On he rattled in this fashion, while I was more and more amazed, knowing as I did that this lively mortal must be near his fourscore years at least; and yet, except for his grey hair, he showed no sign of it.

At last he settled down and began to talk more sensibly, at the same time dropping his Scotch and speaking the Queen’s English as well as I did, though I doubt if he had ever had a tutor in his life.

“Now,” said he, “you shall come along with me to my good friend, Jamie Callender, who keeps the best apothecary’s

in the town. The rain has started, so a cloak will serve me, and there is an old bonnet you can clap on. There's nothing about drugs and potions that Jamie can't teach you, and he's a great hand at the botany. What's more, he's in my debt; and as he also keeps my monies, we can get no dinner till I see him. He should be back and have opened his shop by the time we get there."

We sallied out, and I made bold to ask him how he made his own living, whether he was a gentleman of fortune or no.

"Bide a wee," he said, "and I'll show ye; it's a queer trade for one o' my family, but where the deil drives, ye ken," and so, talking about nothing in particular, an art in which he excelled, we reached a shop plastered up amongst the goldsmiths' booths against St. Giles' old kirk, and discovered Mr. Callender in the act of putting the key into the door; for I found that every shop was locked up during the dinner-hour, which was from twelve to one of the clock, and was the time when the streets were emptiest.

The apothecary was a big, clumsy, unwieldy man, with a shrewd, clean shaven face and very rounded shoulders. Adam Pittendreigh greeted him by rating him soundly for not holding himself better, thumping him very vigorously on his hump, which the vendor of drugs and herbs did not seem to mind in the least.

"Jamie, you rascal!" cried Pittendreigh, "how often have I told you that you spoil your figure? God has of His mercy given you a frame which would befit a king, and the deil has made me a shilpit body, and yet look at us! There can be no doubt as to which is the handsomer man, and that is merely because I make proper use of my one talent. I am a good and faithful servant, while you would like to hide your head in the ground."

"Even so," quoth the big man good naturedly, "ye hae tae mak' the best o' what there is o' ye."

"What, you rogue! you would judge me out of my own mouth? But look you, I have brought you a helper, who is to you as the High Street is to the West Bow. Master Oliphant here would study medicine, and said I to him, 'Jamie Callender is the man to teach you how to poison folk.'"

"Ay, ay," said Jamie, "by means o' your own remedy."

"Was ever such a man?" said Pittendreigh to me as we entered the shop, which had a fine mixture of smells and bottles.

"What is the remedy?" I asked, but had scarce need to do so, for upon the counter was a great placard to the effect that here alone one might buy Pittendreigh's Purifying Pills, as sold to princes, peasants, poets, philosophers, pikemen, and petticoats, and then followed particulars which can scarce be set down in a decent book.

"Ye canna miss it," said the apothecary, "unless ye be blind, and here it is," and with that he showed me a box of pellets near as big as sugar-plums, and of a fine red colour.

"'Tis a most excellent alliteration," murmured Pittendreigh, while I had work to smother a laugh, and wondered what else this marvel of a man had done or made in his lifetime.

"And a maist excellent alterative, eh, Adam?" said the other.

"Assuredly, as many have found to their"—

"Cost," quoth Callender.

"Out upon you, they are cheap at the money. Look at their size and colouring."

"They would kill at ten yairds," laughed Jamie, who seemed to be ever ready with his tongue.

"By my marrow bones, but I'll kill you at less," shouted my companion; "but," he continued, "to business!"

In a very short time it was arranged that I should help the apothecary in his shop, in return for a small weekly wage and as much information as he could cram into me and I could stow away. My duties were to consist of making up pills and potions under his direction, cleaning vials, and now and then running an errand, though he had a laddie for this purpose.

Callender seemed pleased at the notion, and was a trifle surprised to find that I knew the names of half the drugs in his shop, thanks to Doctor Lovell. It was agreed I was to start on the morrow, and though I had scarcely bargained to begin my career in this fashion, yet I had the good sense to be thankful for the chance, and I was very grateful to Adam Pittendreigh.

And, worthy burgess of the city, I would say a word to you. You may be in good repute, an elder of the kirk, a monied man, the father of a well-to-do family, and sport a paunch, and perhaps a coach upon occasion; but I would ask you, have you ever given a thought to the stranger who may be within your gates, to the country lad whom you may keep from going to drink or the devil? have you ever stretched out a helping hand to such a one, and set him on his feet? It means little to you, but may mean all this world and the next to him; and if you have not done so, then I vow that Pittendreigh the Godless, for all his faults, will doubtless be adjudged the more righteous man on that day when all must answer for their deeds.

But I fear I prose, and you will fancy me a doctor of divinity, and not of the healing art; so I will get me back to the apothecary's shop and my two friends.

"And now," said old Adam, "pay me what thou owest, Jamie; and please my Maker, Master Oliphant here will sell many a bushel of these good pills, and never need to swallow one himself."

"Amen to that," said the apothecary, and I echoed his sentiment, more especially in regard to the latter part of the speech, for I liked not the look of the purifiers.

"Ha! that is better," said my companion, as he pushed his silken netted purse into an inner pocket; "there must be illness in the city, or folks are dafter than even I thought them. Howbeit, we will off to the 'White Horse,' and dine as befits our station, while we will crack a very good bottle to your leechship. Jamie there is wedded to his shop, and finds her a hard mistress, or he would make one of our company."

"Haud yer tongue," said Callender good humouredly, "ye beggar yourself fast eneuch without my help; but I'll see ye the morn's morn, Maister Oliphant, gin Adam hasna landed ye in the Tolbooth by then."

"I'll land ye on the floor o' Jamie's booth if ye dinna keep your jaws shut," cried Pittendreigh: and after each of these worthies had taken snuff, the apothecary liberally and clumsily, and the other sparingly and daintily, we sallied forth.

It was then I saw the streets at their best, for fine

madams in cloaks and calashes, and citizens with padded calves, were taking their airings; sedan chairs, in which one caught a glimpse of roguish eyes and powdered hair, were being carried here and there; while folk were tripping in and out of shops, and sellers of sea coal and hawkers of various sorts were crying their wares, despite the rain which yet drizzled a little, though it gave signs of fairing.

My companion informed me we were bound, in the first place, for the Luckenbooths, and there he spent a small sum on comfits and confections in a booth so tiny that there was merely room for its owner and his goods, customers being served over a half-door.

I now found why the bairns of the Canongate had made their rush in the morning, for no sooner had we passed the Netherbow Port than they came flocking about us, as I have seen small birds flock round a corn-sheaf in Holland in the winter-time, and it was mightily diverting to watch them scrambling for the handfuls which their benefactor and mine left in his wake, and still more so to see that they sucked in a good deal more than the mere sweet stuffs. I found thereafter that this was his regular habit, and that he had been fined on two occasions for blocking the street and causing a riot between the bairns of the High Street and those of the Canongate.

We dined very well, and found the drawer most civil, and then spent the afternoon in looking at lodgings; and finally I fixed upon a room in the Row of the Candlemakers, very high up and very small, but with a fine prospect and a whiff of country air whenever the window was opened. The good dame who kept it seemed somewhat of a shrew, but, as I found, was honest, and had a fine notion of making porridge and keeping her neighbours quiet. That night I occupied in writing home an account of my adventurings, though by no means a full one; and as I composed this epistle in Pittendreigh's room, I had perforce to let him have a hand in the writing of it, so that I fear my good mother must have wondered not a little at my knowledge of the Scriptures, and at the number of words beginning with the same letter; but I rested well content, and after getting his promise to deliver it to the carrier, I repaired to my own abode, and, not a little wearied, slept the sleep of the just.

And now for several days I followed my occupation without any incident of note. I found Mr. Callender a kindly master though a mighty gossip, and many a good citizen found pleasure in a half-hour's crack with him, so that I heard all the news of the town, and many a tale and many a jest. The apothecary, however, could not tell me much about old Adam, as he only knew that he was of good family, but much impoverished owing to his eccentric habits and love of poking his nose into other folks' affairs. Indeed, his pills alone lay between him and starvation. According to Callender, "he was not to ride the water on," as we say in Scotland; but I ever found him staunch and true, as I hope to show, and to me he was always the same, which I think was the more remarkable considering his age and mine. He had made a host of enemies, but every man of them was afraid to quarrel with the fiery little beau, who was as active as a cat, and had an excellent notion of fence and sword play and a keen eye for a pistol mark, while his tongue was a yet more dreaded weapon.

The shop was in a most central position, and I thus became acquainted with the sight of the lawyers in wig and gown, and with less pleasant spectacles—to wit, prisoners haled to and from the Tolbooth, and at times jerked out of this world on the flat roof of its projecting wing. I soon saw that Henry Gering had been correct in his estimate of the townsfolk, for the rabble were very fierce, and I had not been a week at my work when there was a bloody fight in the Parliament Square about some trifle or other.

All the time I kept a good lookout for my black-cloaked friend of the "Magpie"; but though I saw some like him I could not swear to his identity, and I was not fool enough to pick a quarrel without certain proof. I had the great sword ready for him, Pittendreigh having bestowed it on me; for, as he told me, it had always been too heavy for him, and had belonged to a dragoon of Lag's company, whom he had sent to his account, though he had broken his own light blade in doing so. I kept it beside me at the shop, as being in this way more readily at hand if I caught sight of a man with coal black hair and a vague countenance.

My work I found on the whole to my liking, though as the days passed I grew a trifle wearied of the smell of

rhubarb, and the weighing out of a scruple of mugwort or an ounce of camomile heads. I might indeed set down many a curious and mirthful thing which happened then and afterwards, such as the gentleman from Ireland who, having taken a pill of Pittendreigh's, vowed he would make an end of its inventor, but found old Adam so much to his taste that he straightway commended his commodity to all his friends in the city, and as a result was shot through the arm by one of them in the King's Park. There was also the case of the old woman who by mischance took a double dose, and the greedy bairn who stole one, mistaking it for a new confection; but I must on to matters of more importance, for these small affairs had no influence on my career, while the coming of Doctor Elliot was its turning-point.

It happened one morning some three weeks after I had become an apothecary, that, as I was concocting a very nauseous black draught for some poor victim, a gentleman of good carriage, portly and dignified withal, having ruffles to his shirt and cuffs, and a cheery, ruddy face, entered the shop. Callender seemed to know him, and treated him with great respect, although the gentleman wanted nothing more than a pennyworth of salts.

They stood talking for a while, and then the stranger caught sight of me.

"So you have set up a 'prentice'?" said he.

"Nay," answered my master, "he is not in articles"; and then they fell to communing in whispers, so that I heard no more till Callender called me forward.

The stranger looked me up and down with an approving smile, and nodded once or twice.

"Well," said he, "I hear you are an aspirant for *res medicæ*, young man, and I fancy I can help you, if you prove yourself a youth of parts and merit."

I bowed, and listened with all my ears.

"I am," he went on, drawing himself up a little and speaking with complacency, "I am Doctor Elliot, and as no doubt you know, Professor of the Anatomy in the college."

I did not know, but I bowed again as though I did, and he seemed pleased.

"Mr. Callender here has given you a good character,

and it so haps that I have need of a præsector; what say you to my offer?"

I stammered my thanks, for I was surprised at my good fortune, but pointed out that I was in a manner bound to Mr. Callender.

"Nay, nay," said that worthy, "if ye put in an hour with me in the morning, and again one at night, ye are free tae help Doctor Elliot."

And so it was settled, and I found myself richer by a few pounds a year and in a fair way to become a chirurgion.

"You will have to learn, of course," said the professor, "for I premise you know nothing of the subject?"

"Well," said I, with, I trust, befitting modesty, "I have read a little of it."

"Indeed," he replied, in a surprised voice; "canst tell me the bones of the arm?"

I did so, for I was great on bones.

"And of the leg?"

These also I named, to his great delight, but I soon came to grief when he took me upon the skull and the great vessels.

"Never heed," he said kindly, seeing I was distressed; "I have had some fools now for a month, and they know not a femur from a humerus, and fancy their dinners reach their great stomachs through the foramen magnum. Let me look at your hands."

I spread out my great paws, and he looked closely at them, examining my nails and finger tips.

"You should be good with the knife," said he, "long fingers and broad points. Very well, you will come to me to-morrow at ten of the clock," and he told me where I might find him; and then, with a hearty good-morning, he stalked away, leaving me both proud and happy, and quite ready to crack a bottle with Pittendreigh, which that convivial soul insisted upon doing when he heard the good news.

As you may suppose, I took my way betimes to the college on the following morning. I had an idea that such a place of learning must be very fine and grand, and so was a trifle disappointed to find that the entrance was by a very dismal wynd which opened from off the Cowgate, itself a fine street upon the whole, with goodly houses and an air of

much gentility. The college, however, was as dismal and mean-looking as the wynd, having nothing of mark save an air of solidity and a leaden-roofed turret or two.

I entered with some fear and trembling by a doorway with a date carved above it, and inquired of an old man who smelt of strong waters for Doctor Elliot. I found he had not yet arrived, but was directed to the room of dissection; and thither I took my way, guided by an odour more powerful than pleasant, and of a kind not hitherto familiar to me. For a good five minutes I stood outside the door of the room, twitching my fingers nervously, and, to tell the truth, a good deal afraid to enter, imagining a hundred dreadful sights, and thinking of all that had passed through these portals. At last I summoned up my courage, and, pushing open the door, set my head within. The place was low in the roof, ill lighted, but of a fair size. A couple of tables stood in its centre, and over one of them was a sheet, and the sheet covered something which showed as a lump at one end, and made a tiny hillock of it at the other. I drew a long breath, staring as though fascinated at the outline of the dead, and then I stepped softly inside, and the door swung to with a creak, which sounded very loud and very terrible in this silent place.

Hung on the wall were a few drawings, and some curious dried and withered things swung from a roof-beam, and rustled a little as a draught of air caught them, while in a dark corner gleamed the outline of a huge skeleton; but I had eyes for nothing but the sheeted figure. I approached it softly, holding my breath; for though, as you know, I had seen death before, it had been in the open, under the blue sky, and the victim had been a little maid, who could scarce be said to have known the mysteries of life. But, if one were to judge by these two upraisings of the coarse and dirty covering, this was a being who had known more of the world, who had sinned and struggled, who perchance had loved and been beloved, who had perhaps thought of death and feared it, and yet had thought of it as coming to others only; and now the grim destroyer had done his work, and there lay the human shell, destined to reveal its hidden wonders to some who one day would be as it was, and perchance would come to the same end. I stood at the

broad end of the sheet, hesitated a moment, and then, with a quick jerk, threw it downwards. A very little would have sent me scuttling from this room of the dead, but what I saw was the face of an old man, his head fringed with silvery hair, and a look of great peace and contentment on his lined and weather-beaten visage. There was nothing horrible or repulsive, though his chin was bristly with a stubbly growth which Time's scythe and not a razor had stopped in its career. There he lay, his jaw sunken a little and his eyes closed, upon the coarse wood of a table, beneath which hung a can; and as I looked at him, and wondered who he might have been, and what he might have done, and how he might have died, and where he now might be, the door creaked again, and Doctor Elliot entered, speaking to a man in a leathern apron, a coarse man, his face pitted and his voice hoarse, who grinned as he saw me, for no doubt I had yet a look half of awe, half of interest upon my countenance.

"Ha!" said Doctor Elliot, "here you are,—punctuality is a virtue indeed,—and this is my man Boddie, and very well named he is. It being the summer there is little doing, but you will have all the more time to become used to the work, and we shall make a start to-day. We have dissected the arm of this subject, and begun also upon the leg, so I will give you a lesson first upon the method and then upon the parts."

He did so, and in five minutes I had no fear left, for I lost all in a deep curiosity and a wonder at the beauties of the human frame, while the moment I grasped the scalpel I felt I had been born to use it. Doctor Elliot indeed, as I learned at a future date, was amazed at my touch and dexterity; and I say this in no spirit of boastfulness, as any citizen of Edinburgh can vouch for my skill with the lancet, and a surgeon, like a poet, is born, not made. To be sure, this was not surgery; but everything must have a beginning, and a knowledge of how to handle knife and saw is as needful as a knowledge of the parts they are to be used upon—at least I have ever found it so.

I could see at once that Doctor Elliot had a love of his work. He had studied upon the Continent, and

chatted away at his ease with me, as he exposed a nerve, or traced a tiny vessel, or cleaned a muscle, telling me something of the foreign schools and their methods, and laying aside the great man for the time being. He resumed it very quickly, however, when with a rush half a dozen shabby fellows of various ages burst in upon us, talking loudly amongst themselves, and spitting freely. Others followed them, some quiet and reserved, some more boisterous than the first comers, but all full of life and energy, and apparently with no thought of reverence or feeling of awe for that bare and silent place, which in my own mind I had named, it now seemed to me, none too correctly, "The room of the dead."

CHAPTER IX

THE THREE GREAT LADS OF THE POTTERROW

I WAS busy enough now, and the days sped past like lightning flashes, so that I never wearied, finding a pleasure in my work, and an interest in the doings of the capital. I came to love and reverence Doctor Elliot, for he had in him the elements of greatness; and to hear him lecturing in the Latin was a delight, so elegantly did he round his sentences and turn his phrases. I shall never forget how once he let me have a peep at his ambitions. He had been talking of the foreign schools again, when suddenly he rose from his stool and began pacing the room, as was his way when excited.

“They are great, no doubt,” he cried, “but why should we not be greater? We have a city situated as no other is, which, though now dull and downcast since the Union, will yet raise her head, and be a centre of wit and learning. The city is not healthy, and where can one better study fevers and the diseases of the chest? I tell you, Allan, I see a day when men shall flock to this Auld Reekie of ours, when her name shall be world wide, and her fame spread to all nations, and why? because she is Scotland’s capital? no! because she has borne her part in history? no! because her site is beautiful and her women fair? no! but because she is famed as a great school of medicine, because she is a nurse for sucking Galens and tooth-cutting Harveys, and many a young Hippocrates will issue from her gates.”

I smiled a little at the man, for he was carried away by this dream of his, and waved his hands abroad, while his eyes shone and his ruddy face grew yet ruddier. He seemed to forget that the very unhealthiness of which he spoke might scare folk; that the country was wild and

the times unsettled; that the citizens cared nothing for the college, and looked upon the wild students askance; and yet perchance my master was right.

Already, from a mere seedling, the school has grown to a young and healthy tree, and it may be that in years to come it will boast a mighty trunk, and throw its branches world wide, and the young chicks who would—to change the simile—break into the egg of medicine may come and roost in it. I pray that it may be so, and truly if such men as Elliot, and he who now fills his shoes, be chosen leaders it may well be so; but in my young days all was very rough and ready, and it took me some time to become used to the students, who were for the most part a rude, coarse, drinking crew, very turbulent and violent at times, but having much *esprit de corps*, as they say in France. At first I was not in favour, for some of them had hoped for the post I occupied; but a certain incident served to establish me very firmly, and I fancy it will bear the telling.

One morning I was at my work,—indeed I often enough put in an appearance at six of the clock, but on this special occasion it was about ten of the forenoon,—when a party of the most dissolute and idle of the students entered, Doctor Elliot not being present.

They were led by a man of repellent face and form, a big, uncouth mortal, not in himself, however, bad hearted, but spoiled and egged on to mischief by some of the weaker of the crew. I saw at once they were bent on giving me annoyance, and I felt a trifle angry, for I had treated them civilly and given them no occasion for a quarrel. I was reading, and they began to talk very loudly, while as I paid no notice they grew bolder, and presently began pitching a number of bones about, and having catches with a skull. I was in charge of the place, but as they were doing no special harm I let matters alone, till they had broken two stools and hurled an *os calcis* through a drawing. Then I deemed it time to interfere, and called upon them to desist.

But they were up in arms at once.

“Wha is this young cock that craws sae crouse?” said one of them, a little weasel-faced fellow, who was a thorn

in the flesh of Doctor Elliot, being very witty, and very idle, and very great at argument.

"I am in charge here in Doctor Elliot's absence, as ye ken fine," I answered hotly, "and ye hae dune enough mischief, sae I shall crack the heid o' the next loon that throws a bane."

Whiz! scarce had I spoken when a shin bone took me on my shin, coming from the big student of whom I have already spoken, and who rejoiced in the name of Cuddy Whinger.

I got upon my feet in somewhat of a rage and bade Master Whinger stand forth.

He came forward, stripping off his coat, and with the joy of battle in his eyes; for Cuddy dearly loved a bicker, and had muscles like tree roots. My coat was already off, so I doubled my fists, while the others began to wager upon our chances.

"A crown upon Cuddy," cried one, who was reckoned wealthy and was the worst of the lot, being a member of that terrible club called the Hell-Fire. No one would take him, but a few more modest bets were agreed upon, and they showed that my chances were accounted small, though I was near as big as their champion and not so loosely built.

The little witty man alone took odds against Cuddy, and I deemed him a youth of wisdom, for I was determined to thrash the fellow, knowing that if I did not I should have no peace thereafter. As my fashion is, I began to get dour, and hard, and very cool, while Master Cuddy was all in a sweat and a fever, as he circled about me. He had no more knowledge of fisticuffs than he had of the relations of the brachial artery, and so I tapped him here and there, bringing out blue spots on his unhealthy skin, while the rest roared their encouragements and doubled their wagers.

"This is a very different battle from my last," I thought, for I had right on my side now, and fought with confidence, till Cuddy, finding himself in a bad way, made a sudden rush and got to close grips.

And then came the struggle.

He was very heavy and had feet as broad as the stools'

tops, and we tugged and strained at each other, trying back-throw and back-break without avail. He lifted me clean off my feet, but I got upon them again, and swung him round upon my thigh, till my arm muscles well-nigh cracked with the strain. He recovered, and again we began stamping about, our backs far out, and our cheeks rubbing one against the other, and I remember finding him too bristly to be pleasant. And then, fearing he would gain back too much breath,—he had none too much to spare by reason of potatoes,—I started again; but he locked me in his huge embrace, and drew me towards him. My back yielded to the strain, bent and better bent, and I felt that all was over; and then for a second he eased a little to get a firmer hold, and in an instant I swept my arms down his now straightened back, and had him near the knees. My shoulders grew tense, I tugged fiercely, and slowly the great man left the ground. Up and up, till I had him balanced, till he was clawing at my head, till the others yelled themselves hoarse; and then, with a mighty heave, I cast him from me, shifting my hands at the right moment, and he went flying in a heap upon the boards, coming down with a thump which might have waked the dead.

Verily I had not played at the football on St. Drynans green for nothing.

“Flay me alive,” cried the little fellow who had bet on me; “I shall be richt royally drunk for one nicht. Hand ower your shekels, ma bieldy boys, and we’ll a’ awa’ and drink tae the midden cock’s verra guid health, for he’s braw in a fecht and mighty in a wrastle!”

And from that day till I fell foul of Jacobite plots and my fortunes changed, I was known amongst them by no other name, and had no stauncher friend than Cuddy Whinger. Meanwhile, I got more and more into the good graces of Mr. Pittendreigh, who had become enamoured at one and the same time of a buxom dame lodging in Mylne’s Court and a bonnie young lass who lived in the Grassmarket.

He made me his go-between when I had leisure; and I liked it well enough, for the former regaled me with cake and wine, taking the matter seriously, and I had

great sport with the latter, who laughed at the whole affair. Together we concocted letters to old Adam, and so much of his beloved alliteration did we put in them that he vowed he had never known so clever a young lass, and swithered between her looks and brains and the other's figure and money-bags.

I see you smile and shake your head, good reader, but Elsie Skinner, despite her golden hair and blue eyes, her fetching stomacher and rumple knots, was not a Dorothy, though, to tell the truth, I fear I thought but little of the latter in those days, being much too busy to be love-sick save when a letter came from home.

Poor Adam's intrigues ended in a ludicrous and unhappy manner, for one day, as luck would have it, I mixed his letters and handed them to the wrong persons, wholly by mistake; and my lady of Mylne's Court had a fit on the spot, and, such is the irony of fate, was given a pill of Pittendreigh by Mr. Callender, whom they sent for in a hurry.

Mistress Elsie merely screamed with laughter, till she came to understand that this would put an end to my visits, when she pouted so prettily, and had such a becoming dewiness on her long lashes, that there is no saying what might have happened had not her mother arrived, and, finding her speaking to a not ill-favoured and unknown young man chased her up the stairs, calling her "idle hussy and wanton baggage," while I fled apace; and this was the end of my comedy of the Grassmarket.

Pittendreigh the Godless took the matter with much philosophy. "'Tis my fate," said he, "for look you, half a score of times I have been on the eve of budding into a bonnie benedict,—what think you of that?—and yet here I am, a boozy, brooding bachelor,—still better, I vow!"—and then he tossed on his wig and hat, and came afishing with me to the Water o' Leith, which down by Randolph's cliff is a very excellent stream for a half-pounder, though, to be sure, not a patch on Tweed. Many a time I have scarce been able to walk homewards by the Lang Dykes to the dam along the north side of the Nor' Loch, by reason of the weight of my basket and the wit of my comrade; for if ever there was a character, it was Adam Pittendreigh.

Ah me! he has been dead this many a year, and I hear rumour that they are going to build a fine street on the Lang Dykes, and lay out a new town beyond, and I should not wonder if they even spoilt the fishing in the Leith Water, and dried up the loch; but, as Adam would have said, *tempora mutantur*.

He had a very curious habit of worshipping, save the mark! each Sabbath day, with a different congregation, ringing the changes on the three bodies which met within St. Giles; so that one week he was a strict Cameronian, the next he was neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring, and the next again he was on the verge of Prelacy, and his comments on the divers sects were more amusing than complimentary. To hear Callender and him together was a treat for tired ears; but though one may tell what they said, one cannot tell how they said it, the former in his dry, quiet voice, the latter burring like a saw fretting its way through the condyles above the knee joint.

Their memory is ever green to me, and I vow I remember their sayings better than I do the names of the apothecary's drugs or the ingredients of old Adam's pills, which have been ousted now by those of Anderson.

And so the time sped on, and I saw Auld Reekie in her snow mantle; and I ask you, can there be a finer sight than the black crags tipped and spotted with a pure ermine, standing like a mighty rampart against a frosty blue sky? And what a scene do the lonely hills of Braid and the bonnie Pentlands make when they are sheeted! and is there any better place to slide than the Nor' Loch when it is crusted in the winter-time and the wild duck in long strings go whistling and whirring past the castle rock? Moreover, what a glow comes from the windows in the High Street, and how the links throw a yellow gleam on the newly whitened stones! To be sure, there is more danger of footpads and drunken fellows, and if you be more than half-seas over you are like to dye the feathery covering a very fine crimson ere the town watch find you in the morning; but, for all that, give me a jolly keen-aired day, when your nose is red and nipping and your ears tingle, and the maids have a rosy colour, and the steam rises from horses' backs. On such a day to hear old Adam over his bottle of ruby claret

at the "White Horse," waiting to see whether the London coach would venture to pass or no upon its fortnight's jolting rumble, was a delight which few shared and many envied.

But the snow and frost had gone, and that biting fiend, the cold east wind, was sweeping up the Canongate and howling round the lion's head, ere I fell in with the three great lads of the Potterrow.

I was well on in the anatomy now, and had a very fair knowledge of both leg and arm, while I was busy on the head and neck; and so one day I was walking homewards, thinking of the last news from Erkinholme, which indeed told me nothing fresh, when, with a yell, two huge men in the dress of the city guard pounced upon me, breathing hard, as though they had been running fast, and, without a word of explanation, set off at full speed, dragging me with them. I was a child in their hands, for both were powerful beyond the ordinary, and so, each grasping an arm, I kept up with them as best I could, my head in a whirl of amazement, and the mud splashing my hose and breeches. It struck me they were disguised, for the guard were for the most part grey headed, while both my captors were young, the eldest not yet middle aged. They seemed greatly excited but did not threaten me in any way, and in a very few seconds we reached the Potterrow, and I was lugged headlong up a steep stair and so into a room; and I deemed it wisest just then to make no resistance, though I vowed to give them some trouble when I got my arms free. But the sight which greeted me drove all thoughts of a fight out of my head.

The body of an old woman lay on the floor, and on his knees beside it and facing me knelt another great man, younger than either of those who had seized me, and he was making a very curious wailing lamentation and wringing his hands. The woman's face, which was a mass of wrinkles, was dusky and livid, and her lips were purple, while her eyes, the whites of which were red and congested, stood out of her head, and her whole visage was contorted and turgid, while she seemed in a spasm. A table stood in the middle of the room, and there were the remains of a meal upon it, and in a moment it flashed upon me that the woman was

choking. My captors had released me, and began talking in some strange language to the other man, upon which he looked up, and first pointed eagerly to the old woman, and then down his own throat.

"Mother," said he in broken English, and all three gazed at me expectantly, as no doubt you have seen dogs do when they have guided their master to something they have found.

I had not a second to think, I could only act; and with the utmost speed I dropped on my knees, and thrust my finger far back to the root of the tongue. I could feel nothing out of place, and it seemed to me death was certain, when an idea came into my head.

I had never read of this being done, I half feared to do it; I trembled as I drew out my clasp-knife and opened the blade, but I was resolved to take the risk, for it seemed to me that the only chance was to open the windpipe!

My hand slid along the neck, I felt the cartilages in the middle line, my finger-tip slipped into the groove between them, and with it as a guide I did the deed. A sharp plunge, a twist, a faint whistle of air, and then, for my brain seemed to be all alert, I bade the man whom I had seen last fetch me two small spoons. He did so, and bent the handles as I told him, and with them kept the wound open, while I worked the woman's arms as Bill Bobolink had showed me, and prayed that she might live, for it seemed to me very likely that if she were to die now, my life would be the forfeit.

For a time there was no sign, and then there was a struggle, a faint sputter at the wound, the bosom heaved a little, and then very slowly the livid colour left the face, and at last the eyes opened and the lips moved; but there was, there could be, no speech.

To tell the tale shortly, I got rid at last of a mass of meat which had slipped down the wrong way, and the old woman was saved, while, now that it was all over, I stood sick and trembling, and sent the youngest son for Doctor Elliot.

When he heard what I had done he said nothing, but tapped me kindly on the shoulder, gripped me by the hand, and bade me take a mighty draught from a black bottle which one of the three great men produced.

For two days the old woman's life hung in the balance,

but she was very hardy, and in twelve days was well, with nothing worse than a scar in the neck.

But the joy of her sons was to me wonderful. It turned out that they were Campbells, men of the Duke of Argyll, who had been given places for a time in the city guard, as there were plots afoot, and Queen Anne's health was none of the best. The two eldest knew scarce a word of "ta English," as the youngest called it, but he was "ferry goot at ta Sassenach," and had even been in London town. By name they were Donald Dhu, Malcolm More, and Kenneth, and such mighty men of valour I had never seen. They towered above me one and all, and the span of each one's shoulders was like the breadth of a door. Donald and Malcolm were bearded and dark, but Kenneth was beardless and fair haired, and he it was who told me that Donald had kept his dagger ready, and had I failed he would have sheathed it in my back.

As it was they looked upon me almost as a wizard.

They knew I had been studying the anatomy, and had stumbled across me as they rushed for the college, and had they would have found no one there, as the hour was late. Thus it was they had seized upon me, and just in time brought me to the rescue. They said nothing for three days, but on the third day, as I went to see the old dame and found her out of danger, Donald Dhu took a claymore in his hand, and there and then the three great lads swore an oath of fealty to me in their native Gaelic.

I gathered from what Kenneth told me that they vowed to serve me in every danger and to answer to my every call. They swore to keep truth with me, and placed me above all, and next only to their chief, and very terrible were the penalties if they broke their oath. It was a stirring sight, and they were very solemn over it, but I merely laughed to myself, for these huge fellows were like simple bairns, and I treated their oath as somewhat of a jest, though I did not show them that I thought so.

Their love for their aged mother was touching, however, especially as she was a little fury of a woman in a white snood and a plaid, who, I fancy, swore at them in Gaelic, and ruled them all with a rod of iron. They were a queer household, and the men themselves, had they had their way,

would have slept in the open and worn kilt and plaid ; but they had to keep within walls and under roof, and sport the dusty red and the breeches and shoulder-straps of the guard, which they could not abide, though they found the great hooked Lochaber axes more to their taste.

When Pittendreigh heard how the Campbells sware to me, nothing would please him but to whisk me away from Callender's shop to the town guard house, and there, had he been allowed, he would have trooped the three of them off to the "White Horse" and filled them as full as they would hold ; but a merciful Providence, in the shape of the sergeant on duty, interposed, though he could not prevent old Adam offering each of the "Philistines," as he dubbed them, a pinch of his very good snuff.

It became my custom in the evenings to spend an hour in the Potterrow—they lived just at the Port and were its guardians—and listen to Kenneth's tales, while his brothers glowered at us, and now and then delivered themselves of some small phrase which they had picked up. I found that Kenneth Campbell, who was about my own age, had a touch of the poet's nature in him, and he discoursed upon his home by Inveraray and on the beauties of wild Loch Awe, while he could sing a song of the Gaelic very plaintively, so as to bring tears into the eyes of Donald Dhu and Malcolm More. He it was who showed me the sword-dance, and now and then I would pit my broadsword against his claymore, and we would cut and parry till the sparks flew, while the two bearded men squatted on either side and shouted "hooch" and "hoch" till the veins swelled on their temples, and they could scarce keep from fighting one another. But this they dared not do, for they had to reckon with their old mother, who had nails like birds' claws and did not hesitate to use them. They were unlike any folk I had met before, and I studied them with interest and even learned a little of their tongue, so that I could give them good day ; and yet all the time I had the wild Celt blood in my own veins, for was not my mother a Cameron from the heather hills of Galloway, which I had never seen ? I shall not readily forget a day when they were granted leave, and the four of us set off for the wild Pentlands by Bonally Tower and the pass of Glencorse, where the raven soars in solitude and the hawk

pounces on his prey. Great was their delight to get amongst the heath, though it was not yet in bloom, and it was hard work to get them home again. Now and then Kenneth and I would take a ramble through the desolate swamp of the Hunters' Bog, or set snares and seek eggs by the loch of Duddingstone. But none of them could get on with Pittendreigh the Godless, whom they looked upon as crazed, and they laughed when I told them he was great with the small sword.

"Ho yis," said Donald Dhu, "a wee sword for a wee man," and he snapped his great thumb and forefinger in contempt.

All the while I got no chance of testing their oath of fealty, and little did I think that a time was coming when I should be very thankful for that same vow taken over the claymore by the three great lads of the Potterrow.

CHAPTER X

THE MAN WITH THE EVIL COUNTENANCE, THE MURDER, AND THE CHASE

THE spring passed and again the summer came, and brought with it incident after incident, till, thinking upon it now, I wonder how I passed safely through it all, though at the time the events seemed natural enough. And the beginning of the whole "apothec," as Pittendreigh would have called it, was the coming of Doctor Silas Solid.

We were in a bad way at the anatomy room, for love or money could not procure us fresh subjects, the council and the citizens having taken a fit of their usual pig-headedness, and all because Cuddy Whinger and a few kindred souls had played a sorry jest or two and scared and shocked them; thus they made the many suffer for the few. I fancy it was with no small feeling of annoyance that one morning Doctor Elliot ushered a stranger into our well-nigh empty room.

"Allan," said he, "let me present you to Doctor Silas Solid, a physician of great repute from London town, who has come to spy out our city and the nakedness of our school."

He spoke jestingly, but I knew there was bitterness beneath his seemingly jovial air and careless mien. And indeed this new-comer was not the kind of man before whom one liked to appear small. He had a sneer upon his face, which was beyond doubt one of the most curious I have ever seen.

I bowed as Doctor Elliot spoke, and looked the man up and down, and as I live I could scarce repress a shudder, so cold, so passionless, so colourless did he seem to be. And yet there was nothing peculiar in his figure. He was about the middle height and of a very ordinary build, although perhaps his shoulders were a trifle squarer than is usual for

a man of his bulk, and his hands and feet were so large as to be out of all proportion to his body. He was lean rather than stout, and the skin of his neck had a scraggy look, lying in lurks and wrinkles, and being of a dull, yellowish-white colour, as though it were half jaundiced.

It was his face, however, that fascinated me, and the sneering smile which sat upon it, as he nodded to me very curtly and looked slowly round the room. It was a long and clean-shaven face, coming sharply to a point below, and not ill shaped. He wore no wig, and his hair was very light in colour, of a shade like bleached straw, and though fairly long it seemed dry and brittle, and stuck out beyond the collar of his coat like the edge of a flesh-brush. His forehead was long, low, and deeply wrinkled, and his eyebrows were scarce marked at all, the hairs composing them being of a lighter colour than even those of his head. His eyelashes had more yellow than white in them, and shaded but ill as strange a pair of orbs as ever looked out of human skull. They were close set and of that very pale and shifty blue which is seen in pigs' eyes that are not pink, while there lurked in them a cold, hard glitter, very horrible to see, and yet which drew your gaze as the magnet draws the needle. His nose was long and straight and sharp, tapering slightly from bridge to point, but with a little flattening and broadening at the very end and about the nostrils, which gave it a coarse look that would otherwise have been lacking. His mouth was a mere slit when the lips were closed, so much so that scarcely any lip-red showed, and what there was seemed tinged with the same unhealthy yellowness which coloured both skin and hair. When he smiled his teeth showed strong and white, but narrow and very long, and the lower row in front were set upon a chin which seemed to curl forwards, and was thick and massive though pointed, while on the skin covering it there was a little gathering, neither a mole nor yet a pimple, but a mere thickening of its upper layers, on which grew some half-dozen coarse and whitish bristles, his only beard. His ears were large, and the skin there, as upon his face, was rough and pitted, and in the little pits were lodged black specks, while over all it had an oily, greasy look, which by no means added to its beauty.

To be sure I did not see all this at once, but I had many a chance thereafter of studying the features of Silas Solid, and there is no use, as one might say in the vulgar tongue, to make minced collops of him.

His dress, though in a fashion all his own, suited his ugliness to a nicety. He had a hat of beaver with the fur plucked half off, and what was left brushed the wrong way; and he wore a long, straight coat of black velvet, which was brown with age and reached half-way down his thighs, its only ornament being a row of pearl buttons with a gap here and there in the row. His breeches were of hodden grey, fastened at the knees by black bows of ribbon, and his hose were of the same colour, while his great flat feet were cased in broad-toed, silver-buckled shoes, which turned up at the ends, and so gave him a mean and sneaking air, and he walked with the footfall of a cat. It was impossible to tell what his age might be, and beyond his outer man there was not much to be made by a scrutiny of him. And yet, colourless though he was, his face had stamped upon it a look of power. These thin and crafty lips were not there for nothing. That stern, ugly chin could never have served a weak man. This Doctor Solid was strong, strong for good or for evil, and, as I tried to read him, I fancied it was for the latter. And yet he was pleasant enough, though I started when I heard his voice, for it had a grating harshness in it, such as had been in that of the villain who had tricked me at the "Magpie." I had not thought before that two men could have such an unpleasant manner of speech and one so alike.

He said but little, however, questioning me once or twice on methods of preserving, and peering at a specimen or two I showed him. Doctor Elliot was ill at ease with this cold and unresponsive stranger, who was clearly an anatomist of some note from what he told us, for he had written two treatises, though we had never heard of them, much to our confusion. He also had studied abroad, and had now taken it into his head to compare the various schools, and for this purpose had paid Edinburgh a visit; for, as he said, "from very little we may gather much."

He did not stay long, for which I was by no means sorry, and as he bade me adieu he looked very fixedly at me, as

though he would impress my features on his memory ; and as I coloured, he gave that sneering smile which I was to learn to loathe with a great loathing, and the last I heard of him that day was his chilling voice upon the stairs as he spoke with Doctor Elliot.

But if I had thought I was rid of him, I was very far from the mark. Our room of dissection seemed to have a strange attraction for him, and well-nigh every day as I sat at work I would hear in the distance a soft, slow footstep, and then the door would creak, and the yellow face would peer in upon me ; and then the velvet coat and grey hose and breeches and shapeless shoes would follow it within, and I would curse below my breath. And yet this man could talk at times, and on other matters besides bones and joints, foramina and sutures, tendons and ligaments, vessels and glands ; and at last it dawned upon me that he must be a very curious mortal, for the doings of the least of the townfolk, the talk of the rabble, the gossip of the wives seemed to interest him.

“It was all strange,” he said, “and unlike London,” and, I thought, greatly to his liking. Had a toast been given in a tavern he was all attention, had there been a tiff between the guard and a few blacklegs he was full of interest. Nothing seemed to come amiss to him, and he was pleased to make the acquaintance of Pittendreigh ; but this acquaintance terminated very speedily, and in a way most typical of old Adam. It happened that Doctor Solid chanced to speak with much contempt of our palace of Holyrood, as did Pittendreigh himself upon occasion ; but the latter would let no other man speak slightly of aught about Edinburgh town, and he rounded upon the stranger in a burst of temper, and threatened to leave him stark and cold in the King’s Park for his insolence, at the same time calling him bilious and greasy, with much alliteration beside, which it is not fit that I should set down in full. Indeed, I had much ado to make him keep the peace, and was somewhat ashamed of his violence, though Doctor Solid told me he regarded him merely as a curious animal, and would like his brain and his spleen that he might add them to his collection.

It was a very good thing for him that old Adam did not hear this speech, as I fancy he would very quickly have

added the physician to his collection of folk whom he had found it needful to let daylight into.

Doctor Silas Solid was a mighty long time in studying our little school of medicine, for he had arrived before the courier who brought the news of the Queen's death, early in August, and week after week sped past, and still his yellow, unwholesome face was a familiar sight, and still he trod the streets with his silent step, and poked his nose into odd corners, and sneered at our methods, and yet somehow made me respect him, for he was without doubt a very clever man, well read and much travelled.

He found great pleasure in arguing with Doctor Elliot and also with Doctor Crawford, the chemist and Professor of Physic, and all three at times became very heated, though Silas Solid only in his argument; so that it was to me a diversion to watch them, Doctor Solid laying down the law with the forefinger of his right hand on the palm of his left, while the others tapped fiercely with their canes, and would not yield an inch.

Whether or no I should have come to the conclusion that this Englishman was something more than he pretended to be I cannot say, for what happened drove all thoughts of him for the time out of my head, and set me furbishing up the broadsword which had lain so long idle in the shop of the apothecary.

It chanced that one evening as it was growing dusky I had to take a vial and a plaister to the house of one of Callender's customers who lived not far from the Netherbow Port. This good man suffered from a fit of the gout, by no means a common thing with us in Scotland, save indeed amongst the greatest wine-bibbers, and Mr. Strahan, for such was the gentleman's name, was but a three-bottle man at the best, and never drank save in company, which is an excellent rule for those who can keep it. He would have me look at his toe and hear all his woes, and so night had fallen ere I quitted his none too jovial presence and found myself in the street again. Not only had night fallen, but so had rain, and it was still doing its best to turn the streets into mire. I stood at the door for a moment, and watched it driving past a flickering oil lamp which hung from an iron rod stuck in the wall of the next house. The

street seemed wholly deserted save for a lean dog, wet and bedraggled, which snuffed about a garbage heap, but fled at sound of my footsteps; for I made haste to get home, having no cloak with me and having far to go. I soon found, however, that I was becoming drenched, and so deemed it wiser to slip into a close for a half-hour in the hope that it might clear, especially as I had a touch of the cold and a little rawness in the throat. I leaned against the wall in fair comfort, as the place was a *cul de sac*, and there was no draught; and my thoughts ran back to Erkinholme, and I wondered what had become of Henry Gering, and longed to meet him again and atone in some measure for my past faults. Visions of Dorothy Wayward also floated before me, and I had to confess that my attempts to nurse my wrath against her had not been favoured with much success, for I dwelt more upon her bonnie looks than her hard words, on the grace of her figure than her bitter taunts, and on her wit and merriment rather than on her sarcasm and revilings.

Still, I had so far forgotten her that these memories did not cause my pulse to quicken and send a thrill through me as her presence had been wont to do, and I looked back upon her merely as an incident in my career, a passing pleasure or a passing trouble, which you will. I laughed at myself for a love-sick loon, and knew, or rather thought I knew, that now I was a man who had put such follies behind him, and was carving a road to fame and fortune, it might be by aid of the very ring o' luck which I had scoffed at. As I dreamed in this fashion I became aware that someone was passing down the other side of the street. There was the sound of hurried footsteps, and peering from my place of shelter I made out dimly a tall, cloaked figure swinging along the causeway in the shadow of the houses. The man, whoever he was, seemed in a hurry, for he was soon abreast of me, though he had been at a distance when I first saw him, and I thought I noted a sword sheath sticking out from behind him, when from a window on his side of the street there came a flash, a sharp report, the man gave a little cry, which was half a moan, reeled and staggered, and then sank all of a heap into the runnel which was flowing full. For a moment I

stood, horror-struck and amazed, and then with a hoarse shout I darted out into the street, for in that brief flash of flame I had seen something which set me tingling with anger and excitement. I had seen a stair window, barred and without glass, and through the gap left by a broken bar I had seen a man leaning out over the sill; and as the light had for a second struck upon his face I had seen and recognised the coal black hair, the dark eyebrows, the patched chin, and the colourless face of the villain who had robbed me at the "Magpie" and had twitted me from the Book of Proverbs.

The wretch had shot this poor wayfarer in the back, but he had not reckoned on my being witness to his foul deed; and forgetting I had no weapon, I made for the body, and reached it just as a fellow in a black cloak issued from the open door which led to the stair from the window of which the bullet had sped to find its billet. He started as he saw me, and then snatched what must have been a second loaded pistol from his belt, levelled it at my head, and fired. Quick as thought, ere the red flame leaped from the weapon's mouth, I dropped, and the bullet went singing over me, and must have sped down the close opposite, for I did not hear it thud against the house walls. I lay still, and became aware that the man beside me was not quite dead, for I could feel him quiver slightly, and he seemed to be gulping in his throat, no doubt swallowing the blood which rose and choked him. His murderer must have thought he had made an end of me also, for I heard him step towards us, and then he began searching his victim.

But as he did so I suddenly sprang at him and gripped him by the arm. He cursed in that horrid, harsh voice which to me sounded so like that of Doctor Solid, and struggled fiercely; but I had him as in a vice, and I swung back my left arm to stun him with a sweeping blow, when a sharp, keen pain darted through my wrist, and involuntarily I loosed my grasp. At the same moment there was a stir at the house windows, I heard the sound of heavy footsteps in a measured tread coming down the street, and the man, who had cut me with a dagger, took to his heels and fled. I turned and saw the gleam of the lanterns of the watch and heard them shout, and then of a sudden it struck me I was in a very false position. A mad fear took hold upon me. I

got upon my feet, and set off at full speed, and in a moment the whole crew of them were in full cry behind me. Even as I ran down the wet and greasy street I kept thinking if it had not been better to stay and tell the truth and brave the matter out, but I remembered a poor wretch who had gone to his Maker in the Grassmarket for a crime which it was afterwards found he had not committed; and in any case I had put myself in the wrong now, and had to trust to my legs and my wind to save me. I felt my hand wet, and knew I must be bleeding freely, and so, fearing to leave a track behind me, I twisted my kerchief round my wounded wrist, hurriedly but firmly, though I lost ground in doing so.

I did not keep long to the main street, but darted down a narrow wynd, and thus got a fresh scare; for as I passed a dark doorway a figure sprang out from it and struck at me. By a miracle, as it seemed, I saved myself, swerving to the side, a trick I had learned on St. Drynans green, and I caught him a buffet which sent him reeling backwards into the gloom whence he had come, and I knew instinctively that this was the villain for whose crime I was now being hunted to the death.

I dared not stop, however, for ten chances to one he had some way of escape in his rear, and the men of the guard came yelling round the corner behind me, while windows were thrown up, and heads peered out, and things were flung at me. Till then I had formed no plan, I had merely run wildly, keeping in the shadow; but I saw plainly that all this uproar would bring folk with any courage out of doors to bar my way, and in any case it was not so late but that some might yet be in the street, and try to stop me.

What was I to do? I had reached the foot of the wynd by this time and had turned into the Cowgate; but here the footing was treacherous, the street being foul and slippery, and I stumbled badly, twisting my ankle a little and grazing my kncc. It was nothing much, but enough to hinder me in my flight, and I saw I could not escape by mere speed. Some of the guard seemed to be fast runners for old men, but I dared not look behind to see how close they might be, though I fancied from their clamour that none had rounded the corner; and so, with a vague hope of being undiscovered, I slipped into a passage

and held my breath. It was all in vain, for next moment a great man, who must have been very light upon his feet and closer than I thought, rushed in upon me, and gripped me by the collar, flashing a lantern in my face, but almost as quickly loosed his hold, and dashed out again, shouting wildly, and I heard the crowd a second later sweep past my hiding-place, and knew with a great joy and thankfulness that Donald Dhu had been true to his oath; for it was his voice that I had heard, and it was he who now led the chase after nothing up the silent, tortuous length of the street called the Cowgate. I was far from safe, however, for I knew that when there was no sign of me round the next turning my pursuers would begin searching every close and entry, and it behoved me to seek some more secure place. I dared not venture out into the street, for laggards in the pursuit still hurried past, and the main body would likely soon return; and though they had not got a clear view of me, my bloody wrist would certainly betray me, as they would examine every doubtful character they met.

All that remained to me was to explore the doorway further, and as I had thrust my hand into the breast of my coat I trusted there would be no crimson spotting to lead to my discovery; and so, my heart beating fast, partly with exertion, partly with fear and excitement, I stole softly along in the darkness and found a stair. It was of wood and creaked horribly as I stepped upon it, but I crept up on tiptoe, holding my breath as I slipped past what I took to be doors. Up I climbed, a ray of night-light filtering in here and there by narrow slits in the wall, and so still was the place that I could hear the rain pattering outside. Everyone seemed to be abed, though as I climbed upwards I heard a door below me open and shut, and stood for a moment in dread of discovery.

Nothing and nobody followed, however, and the noise of the chase had already died away. I hoped to find some way out upon the roof, and thence by a rope or wall to the ground, and so I groped upwards, for it grew darker the higher I went. At last I reached a land, and from the slope of the roof on either side knew I was at the top. It was too dark to see whether there was any trap-door or mode of exit, and so I paused irresolute. Then again I crept forwards,

and suddenly saw a faint line of light, which seemed on a level with my head. It looked as though it came from a lamp or candle, and I took a step nearer it, craning my head forward to get a better view. But my foot stepped into empty air, I overbalanced, and clutched wildly at nothing. Then my toe struck upon a step, and, pitching forwards, I plunged heavily with my head and shoulders against a door, which burst open, and I went flying into a room, coming down heavily upon the floor. I was dazed and half stunned by my fall, but as I gathered myself together I became aware of a man who had been sitting writing by the light of a guttering candle, and who had sprung to his feet as I came crashing in upon him, and now stood staring at me with a look of the utmost astonishment.

And no wonder, for as I collected my wits, and after I had passed my hand across my eyes, I also stared at him in still greater wonderment, and marvelled exceedingly, for the man whom I had disturbed in such indecent fashion was no other than Henry Gering, my late tutor at Erkinholme, whom I had wronged so deeply. Bruised, scared, and astounded though I was, I could not help giving a somewhat painful grin when he began his old speech in the old way, apologising now, however, for *my* abrupt entry.

"I crave your pardon," he said, "but the light is bad and the step a stumbling-block," and then he recognised me.

"God bless me!" he cried, "but it is Allan Oliphant! How did you find the house?" Then without waiting for an answer he came close to me as I sat dismally on the floor. "What is this?" he said hastily. "You are wounded, lad," and in a moment he was on his knees beside me.

"It is nothing," I answered, "a mere cut on the wrist," and drew my hand from my coat, to find the kerchief sodden with blood, which, however, had begun to congeal and crust.

"Nothing! you must be weak; see, drink this," and he got me a cup of water, for which I was very grateful.

"For God's sake," said I, "shut the door, and let us talk in whispers," and I hurriedly told him what had befallen me, for we both seemed to have wholly forgotten how we had parted and the shadow that had lain between us.

"Tut, tut," said he, pulling at his long nose, a trick he had when disturbed, "this seems to me somewhat of a dilemma."

"Egad," said I, for I never could resist making a jest if I got the chance, "it is. Old Adam would have made it into an alliteration, and not been far wrong."

"Who?"

"Only an acquaintance I have in the town."

"Ah, but it is passing strange you should have been guided here. Let us offer thanks," and he dropped again upon his knees, for Henry Gering was a very pious man, though no whit a hypocrite or a sniveller.

I pulled off my hat, which fortunately had stuck upon my head, and waited till he had done.

"That is for one-half of the night's work," said I, "but what about the other?"

"Hush, hush, lad," he said, shaking his head, "wert ever impatient; but we will see to your wound first. I have a closet here in which I can conceal you if need be, and I am alone, the good dame on the land below owning this room and seeing to my wants."

I was very keen to hear how he came to be under the eaves of a house in the Cowgate, and fell to calling him Master Gering as in the old days, greatly to his pleasure, as I could see; but he bade me bide my time, and undid my bandage. The cut, though long, running from bone to bone across the back, was luckily not deep, and I could move my fingers, for which I was duly thankful. He bound up my wrist as gently as a woman could have done and looked his astonishment when I discussed learnedly of extensor tendons, and showed him there was no danger from the slash.

"So it was true?" he said.

"What was true?" I asked.

He flushed slightly, and cleared his throat.

"I chanced to hear you had come to study medicine, and indeed I was writing to you at the college this very night."

I did not ask from whom he had his information, but I made a shrewd guess, and was surprised to find I was still vulnerable on this point. With an effort I passed the matter over, and repeated the last part of his answer.

"You were writing me?" I cried, if one can cry in a stage whisper.

"Even so, Allan," he replied; "but sit you down, lad. Or stay, we will wash away as many of those stains as possible,

and then I shall tell you my tale, and afterward you can tell me yours."

"Very good," said I, "if we are not cut short by the watch."

"I pray not," he said.

"Egad," said I, "'tis a case of watch and pray."

"Allan, Allan," he said reprovingly, "this levity is not befitting. What would your good mother say?"

I hung my head, for I had meant to show him that I had learned town ways and could use my tongue to some purpose; but somehow or other my gentle ribaldry fell flat, and I felt the big boy again, as I had done at Erkinholme.

All the same I would not hear a word till I had examined the whole place, and to my joy found a way out upon the roof, which might be put to a good use if need be.

"I see you are as of old," said he, with that rare smile of his, "quick to act and ever to the point. Methinks the sword would have suited you better even than the lancet."

"It will suit me better to deal with the villain for whose sins I have suffered this fright; but listen!"

We sat in silence, and there came to our ears very faintly a noise in the street below, though we were well away from it, the tiny window of the room opening on the back of the house. Nothing came of it, however, and though we kept on the alert for full ten minutes we were not disturbed; and Henry Gering told me all that had befallen him since he had left the bonnie south country, though to be sure there was not much to tell.

All the time I could not get over my wonder at having thus dropped upon him in what was clearly a temporary abode, for his valise and the dressing-case which had given me such uneasy mirth lay upon the floor half packed or unpacked, the walls were bare, and there were none of those trifles which the most simple and absent-minded of men gather about them when they squat down in a place, however humble.

It must have been Providence that had sent me this good fortune, or perchance the ring o' luck had a hand in it (as well as on it), for otherwise I might at that moment have been kicking my heels in the Tolbooth, with a very fair prospect of dangling on its flat-roofed part, or forming a similar edifying spectacle for the mob at the east end of the Grassmarket.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH A PRICE IS SET UPON MY HEAD

WHEN Henry Gering turned his back on Erkinholme, sad and disheartened at my conduct and bearing, but gladdened by the knowledge of the love Mistress Dorothy bore him, he had not even a vague idea as to what he should do.

My father had given him a letter in writing, however, stating his attainments and how he had served him, and with this as his chief bow-string he had set off, as I did at a later period, for the capital. He had gone to a lodging-house, and there he fell in with a gentleman named Napier, who owned an estate some twenty miles from town, and who, as I gathered, was so taken with my tutor's modest bearing and learned converse, that he straightway engaged him both as secretary to himself and tutor to his sons; and there Henry Gering had stayed for a year in much comfort, and written several pamphlets, both social and political.

It was as a result of one of these he was now in Edinburgh. It happened to have come under the eye of some great man in London, who was so pleased with its tenor that he had written to Mr. Napier and then to his secretary, offering the latter a post under him at the Parliament House, and Henry Gering had accepted the same; though, as he said humbly, some kind friend had no doubt spoken on his behalf, for the big wig seemed to know much concerning him, and had too great an idea of his talents.

I was curious to see his letter to me, but he said it was unfinished and he would leave it so. I pressed him, however, for its contents, and scarce knew whether to laugh or cry when he told me what he had written.

He confessed he had been foolish, and begged me to

pardon him if he pained me by a reference to our past relations.

"You see, Allan," he said gravely, "I thought much about our battle, shall we say, and I remembered your father's precepts as to the qualifications of a gentleman. Moreover, I laid the matter before Mr. Napier, who is a very strict and honourable man. I put what is called a hypothetical case to him,—I trust you see the derivation?—and his advice was such as I might have expected from your father also."

For the life of me I could not make out what Henry Gering meant, and he seemed anxious to keep circling round the point and to steer clear of the root of the matter. However, I merely nodded and let him proceed, which he did, hesitatingly and in much anxiety, twisting his long, misshapen fingers about and fidgeting on his chair.

"I considered very carefully," said he, "and I came to the conclusion that no other course was open to me; and so for near a year I have been at pains to become instructed in the art of fence and the use of the pistol, and I am now somewhat proficient."

My eyes grew big with wonder, but I said nothing.

"Ahem!" continued my tutor, "you clearly understand that I did not doubt but that your feelings had, ahem! remained the same towards me; in other words, my dear Allan, I fancied, as I now find erroneously, that you still required satisfaction."

"Satisfaction?" said I.

"Exactly," he said quickly. "As far as I can judge, and pardon me saying so, we neither of us acted in quite a befitting manner, having recourse to the vulgar use of fisticuffs, which Mr. Napier strongly condemns; and so I thought it but fair that if you still desired to settle our grievances,—and I must confess I was greatly in the wrong,—I say, I considered it but right that you should have choice of weapons; and though I am by no means a warrior," he smiled gravely as he said this, "yet methinks I could perhaps defend myself to an extent consistent with honour."

"Master Gering," said I, in a queer strained voice, for though I was half choked with laughter at the daft idea which had come into the man's head, yet there were tears

in my eyes, "did you consider, Master Gering, that this might have very seriously interfered with your career and your plans?"

"I own with shame," he said, in his anxious, half-pleading voice, "that such unworthy thoughts troubled me, and indeed I had somewhat of a struggle to do the right thing; but, you see"—

"I see," I cried, springing to my feet, "the best man I know. Master Gering, Master Gering, it is for me to ask your forgiveness. I was about to do so when I fell ill, for I acted vilely, and"—

"Tut, tut, Allan," said he, "you wrong yourself, boy; but I confess this is a great relief to me, for you are very active, and, if you will forgive me saying so, a trifle hot tempered, and I have always been somewhat of a coward, as you know."

"I know nothing of the sort," I shouted, forgetting all about my late flight and present concealment; "you were no coward when you fought me on the banks of Tweed, and it is to you I owe my present safety, for had you liked you might have handed me over to the guard."

"God forbid," said Henry Gering, and reached out his great soft hand to me, and such a mighty squeeze did I give it, despite my wounded wrist, that he winced and blew upon his fingers afterwards.

"And now," said he, greatly cheered, "what of your own doings?"

I told them briefly, though I made but slight reference to Pittendreigh, for I doubted if my tutor would approve of the old beau, his language, and his ways. He was much interested to hear how Doctor Lovell's book had decided me, and grew excited as I told him how I had won the fealty of the Campbells, and then settled down to discuss with me the bearings of the latest adventure which had fallen to my lot.

"It may be a private affair, Allan," he said, "but I doubt it. You know how unsettled is the country; there is word of a rising in Cumberland, and they are restless in the Highlands. Mark me, we shall have war ere the year is out, and this looks like one of these tiny ripples which ruffle the surface of a mighty ocean swell. I would keep a sharp outlook, for this assassin has every reason for getting rid of

you, and you would do well not to mingle with crowds and to carry a weapon."

I promised to follow his advice, and then we sat and talked of old times, and made a compact to write to each other, though never a word of Dorothy passed our lips; for we seemed to know instinctively that this was dangerous ground, and our newly cemented friendship was very sweet to us. Daylight came and found us still talking, but it was needful for me to get clear away before the house awoke, and so I rose.

"I shall see you again?" I queried, as I bade him farewell.

"I fear not, Allan," he said; "there is some risk of my losing the post if I delay."

"And yet," said I, with a smile, "you would have wasted time by fighting me. I fear you are a bit of a fire-eater after all, Master Gering."

"Tut, tut," he answered, "take care of yourself, dear lad, and may God bless you," and so we parted, and I slipped quietly down the stairs, and so out into the silent street, feeling happier than I had done since I had set off to find Mistress Dorothy and learn my fate.

It was a fine summer's morning after the rain, and I reached home without seeing a soul, save once, when I came upon an amusing scene in the Row of the Candle-makers, to wit, two very drunken worthies being shown out of doors by a third still worse, who held a lighted candle and seemed trying to make the most of its sickly light. I hurried past them, though they called out to me asking me whether it was to-day, or yesterday, or to-morrow, and they were arguing upon this important subject the last I heard of them.

All the time I could scarce believe I had really witnessed a murder, been within an ace of finding myself in prison, and fallen in with Henry Gering. Indeed the last event was by far the most remarkable, for I do not think I have said that my tutor had been but two days in the room in which I found him, and had only gone there because the lodging-house he usually affected chanced to be overcrowded. However, my bound-up wrist was very clear evidence that I had been neither drunk nor dreaming, and

it suddenly struck me I had to give some excuse or other to my sour-visaged dame for my all-night's absence. I made up a very pretty story of having been called to tend the wounded man, which, to be sure, had a good deal of truth in it; but I might have saved myself the trouble.

She met me as I climbed the stairs, and shook her head at me.

"I sair misdoot me ye are on the braid road," said she, "foregatherin' wi' yon hop-o'-ma-thumb and drouthy auld body Pittendreigh. Your mither should ken o' this, ma lad, you that I thocht sae weel brocht up and a decent loon."

I felt, and no doubt looked, bewildered.

"Ay, ay," said she, "nane o' your havers, noo, aboot workin' a' nicht, for that graceless auld sinner sent word tae me ye were bidin' wi' him, and fine I kent that meant a sair heid and a sick wame, and ye look gey like it. Gin there's mair o' this, oot ye gang, Maister Oliphant, for I'll no' hae a wastrel and through-ither in ma hoose."

It dawned upon me that old Adam had been up to some game or other, so I merely answered her civilly, though a trifle sternly, telling her I was as sober as she was, kept my feet as well and my tongue better; and seeing I had no signs of a past debauch about me, in spite of my stained clothes, she came to an end of her railings, though she could not help muttering that she "wunnered why men maun aye hae their crack in the wee hoors," and shook her head again, evidently thinking I was a plotter of some kind, if not a drinker, for her question in life was, "Can any good thing come oot o' Pittendreigh?" and her answer, "No."

Early though it was I had my breakfast, Mistress Soorock being one of those restless creatures who are up with the sun, and take much credit to themselves in thus getting ahead of their fellow-mortals. She had her little ways, as will be seen, but was a very decent woman, and I have never met her equal in making porridge, the which is a virtue in itself.

When I had done I took my way to Adam's lodgings, which, it being summer-time, were near the Bristo Port again, and I found him snoring very peacefully. Without much ceremony I roused him up, whereupon he rated me very soundly.

"By the great bull of Bashan," said he, "which you're as like as two peas, can ye no' let a man have his forty winks? Remember I am old enough to be your father."

"Twice over, sir," said I.

"You are a rascal!" he bellowed, rubbing his eyes. "And consider my delicate constitution; if I die before my time you are the guilty person, sir, and I shall have damages out of you, sir, as sure's my name is Adam and not Eve."

"Mistress Soorock will have it evil," said I.

"S death," he cried, swinging out of bed with as much agility as a monkey, "that woman will hang if her looks do not cut the rope; but I did you a good turn with her last night, ye ungrateful rogue."

"That," said I, "is what I have come to see you about. It appears you have perjured yourself."

"Go to, go to! I came to see you, and that beldame bawled out at me thirty yards away to the effect that you were out, and more beside. By way of soothing her I told her you were to spend the night with me, as I feared for your morals; and her language, sir, would have put any roaring trooper o' Dalziel's to shame. Thereupon I asked if she desired public prayer for herself in St. Giles' kirk the next Lord's day; but she came out with a besom, and I beat a masterly retreat, for ye can do naught wi' an angry woman."

"You have done me a very good turn, howbeit," I said, and proceeded to tell him of what had happened to me overnight.

"By my marrow bones," said he, "but that is an experience. There will be news of this, and we will to the guard-house this very morning and see the placards."

"Speak for yourself, sir, an' it please you," I answered; "you forget I do not wish to put my head into a noose."

"Just so," said he; "a vry laudable desire, and you will best obtain it by coming with me. The bitten rat does not seek the trap, and the burnt bairn dreads the fire, ye ken; so the last place they would look for a suspect is the guard-house. But curry hunker, my lad, and I will see to my cooking." He set to work, for he prepared all his own meals, and had many curious devices and queer flavourings, though I am bound to say he turned out most excellent

dishes, and had the eye of a French *chef* and the stomach of a gourmand, though he could do very well with rough-and-ready fare, having no digestion to speak of, or rather no indigestion.

"For a beginner in strategy," said he, "you have done very well, though there might have been more to be made out of the situation."

"God bless me," said I, "I had enough out of it. Look at my wrist and my stained under-vest."

"Some folks dinna ken their blessings; but see and clean yourself. Ye had best leave your vest here in any case; it's no' in the fashion, and is gettin' ower sma' for your muckle kyte. This tutor o' yours seems to be a decent body for an Englishman. Hoo is't ye telt me naethin' o' him before? Ha, ye rascal!" he cried, as I looked confused, "I will bet ye a crown there's a lass in the case. Ye sly dog, I had aye ma doots about ye. Come, come, this bit o' tittle-tattle will season my bacon, which is as tasteless as yon Doctor Solid's conversation, a plague on his dirty yellow phiz! But get on, sir, get on, ye villain!"

Thus adjured, I had nothing for it but to make a clean breast of the whole affair, and I stated the matter very truthfully, while old Adam's shifty eyes danced in his head and twinkled with merriment, and he fairly screamed with laughter when I told him about Henry Gering's letter.

"Now let thy servant depart in peace," gasped the blasphemous old beau, "for never did I hear of such a pedant. By my marrow bones, we live to learn. I will go see this rich fellow to-day, for he is worth knowing. Bless my soul, I shall parade him in the King's Park and test his efficiency."

"You are a trifle late," I answered, not best pleased at his ridicule, "Henry Gering leaves for London this very morning."

"I would I were a highwayman on the north road then," said the incorrigible; "dost think he would count taking his purse a villainy? And yet you say he has won this lassie, and from a stout, well-set-up lad like you? Preserve us all, but there's no fool like a woman, no, not even an old fool. Ah, you siy dog!" and he poked me in the ribs till I shifted away from him.

I think he saw that reference to the lassie who had scorned me was not much to my taste, for presently he changed the talk, and in a short time got him into his out-of-door clothes, and we set off for the High Street. I must confess I had a few qualms in thus putting a very bold face on the matter, for though I felt certain none could have recognised me, yet my bleeding wrist might have left tell-tale traces, and I knew how little may send a man to his doom. Old Adam had fastened up my cut with plaister from Master Callender's shop, and my coat cuffs, which were of a fair length, hid it from view; and so I made the best of it, though I could not help fancying that folk eyed me with suspicion, and nearly took to my heels when I caught sight of a fellow in a dusty red coat.

"Hoots," said Pittendreigh, "this will never do, sir; it's no doubt very fine to be a person of importance, but there's no use letting everyone see that you think so."

I smiled, for even as he spoke he was saluting at one and the same time, and with the air of a provost, a wealthy citizen, who never saw him, and a wretched old hag who, pipe in mouth, was sitting on a creepie by the weigh-house, and who was so proud of his condescension that she let a starved cat carry off some of the dried fish she had for sale, while she leered and mumbled at the others of her kind, which was her way of preening her feathers and spreading her tail. I soon forgot about my own danger in watching old Adam's mannerisms and gestures, which ever served to keep me amused; and indeed a mountebank would have been hard put to it to beat him, while I am convinced that, had he gone upon the boards, say in London, he would have made his fortune and probably killed a few more folk, though merely through causing them to choke or rupture with laughter. I once indeed asked him why, by way of experience, he had not footed it upon the stage, and found that as usual he had tried this also; but his garments had in some way come to grief, and though he had made the house roar till it shook again, the laugh was at him, and not with him, and he had made a vow to have done with the footlights, and, what is more, he had kept the vow, no difficult thing in Auld Reekie. Ere long we reached the guard-house, but there was no notice of any kind, and, fearing to attract

attention if we lingered, we passed on; nor did I see anything of Donald Dhu or his brothers.

"There you see," said my companion, with, as I thought, undue impatience, "the wisdom of these addle-pated asses. They know right well the man has given them the slip, and they will not yet raise the hue and cry. Had the placards been out, every idle rogue would have been on the quest for you, my lad, and half a dozen poor devils would have been lugged to the Tolbooth ere now. But so much for procrastination, which is a very excellent word, and its origin, as being from the Latin, you no doubt know." Thereupon he began to discuss the classics with me, till I remembered I had to be at the anatomy room, and hurried away, leaving him to continue his promenade to the "White Horse," as was his use and wont.

Bad news awaited me at the college, for I found that Doctor Elliot was ill, and Boddie told me he desired to see me at his house. Thither I betook myself, and found my poor master far from well, and also much worried in his mind. He had taken the emptiness of the room very greatly to heart, especially as Doctor Solid was present, and bewailed his bad luck in having fallen sick at such a time, more especially as but one region remained to be done, and the students would complain and doubtless disperse, as they had remained on purpose to make an end. The usually jovial and cheery man was peevish and fretful, and I did not like his colour or his breathing, and went to fetch Doctor Crawford to him, feeling downhearted, for Doctor Elliot had been a very kind friend to me, and it was pitiful to see how low he had been brought, though I knew his health had been failing for some time past. Thereafter I proceeded to the room of dissection, and found a few grumbling fellows, who were poring over musty parts and preparations on which the mould had gathered. There was a dull and dreary air about the room, and Boddie came and went with sulky face and sullen mien; for though I cared little for the man, he was part and parcel of the place, and very faithful to his master. I felt a loathing of the whole affair, as one is apt to do when time hangs heavy. I offered to demonstrate upon the skeleton, but the men were lazy and scarce deigned to listen; and so till noon I buried

myself in a book dealing with operation, which had some very marvellous and terrible pictures, that used to haunt my dreams after I had been to supper with Pittendreigh.

That worthy was waiting for me when I reached home, and seemed in high spirits over something or other. He told me that I must accompany him to the guard-house again and see the description of me they had posted up.

"I opine," said he, "I was the first to see it; for I am just back, and every good citizen was taking provender and swilling his twopenny. You had best behave, Master Sawbones, otherwise I shall proclaim you, and pocket more than I could make from my very good pills in a week, unless, indeed, the Lord sees fit to send us some plague or other."

He let me finish my meal, however, chattering away all the time; and here I will digress for a moment, craving your pardon the while. No doubt you have wondered how a mere lad such as I was could be on terms so intimate with an old man, who, as far as his years went, might be said to have one foot in the grave. To this day, thinking over my relations with Adam Pittendreigh, I am filled with astonishment. But it must be remembered that, though he was old, he was in many ways merely an old boy; and truly I never could imagine him a man of eighty. I always had a vague idea he was of an age which no one else had reached, an age as much his own as his pills were, a sort of second childhood without decay, a period he had invented for his own purposes, and which would continue as long as he liked; for to imagine Pittendreigh the Godless a corpse was as easy as to imagine a woman silent for ten minutes in company with her own sex. Moreover, I was, as the saying is, "old for my years," and though I might now and then poke fun at Adam, yet I ever treated him with a certain respect; for though many would have it otherwise, and vowed he was all froth and fizz, those who knew him better were aware that this strange little man had a mind keen as a needle-point and sharp as a razor's edge; that had he liked he might have been a very great man, for he had a wonderful grasp of many subjects, and a marvellous knowledge of the crooked and devious ways of mankind, and when he cared to be serious he held you spellbound, as old Matt Kerr had discovered

long since, and as I very quickly found. It was not till after he had passed away, merry and jesting to the last, that I found there had been a tragedy in his life, and that his early ambitions and desires had come to nothing, or rather turned into very quaint channels, and made him the man he was. Howbeit, I may not tell his tale, but must return to the day on which for a second time we paid a visit to the guard-house, and I was all in a swither, as though I wished to see what they had made of me. I yet feared to see it; and Pittendreigh would tell me nothing, only chuckling to himself and at times tapping with his cane upon the stones, a way he had when pleased.

It was very easy to see that there was something out of common, for as we came down the street we saw a crowd about the doors, a crowd on whose outskirts men stood talking earnestly, with troubled, anxious faces, while in its press there were those who shouted and those who laughed, and from it bare-legged caddies darted forth, carrying the news, which they had gathered from the gossip, to their patrons and employers.

A horseman was sitting his beast in the centre of the street and trying to make out the writing from over the heads of the people, and I started when I saw him, for it was Doctor Silas Solid, who, however, had changed his dress, and wore clothes more befitting the times in which he lived and his pretensions to be a gentleman.

He did not see us, and Pittendreigh waited for me as, forgetting Henry Gering's advice, I elbowed my way into the throng. It was some time ere I got near enough to make out the placard, which was in danger of being torn from its place, and was guarded by one of the watch with a pike, who made sundry dabs at those nearest him, whereupon they recoiled on the toes of those behind, and thus gave occasion for much strong language and digging in the ribs.

At last I got a good view, and read as follows:—

“Whereas last night about ten or the clock there was committed in the High Street of our city, hard by the Netherbow Port, and upon the south side, a very foul murder by pistol or musket shot, on the body of a man unknown, and whereas the murderer or murderers have not yet been taken, though there be hopes to the contrary, it is here set forth that whosoever delivers up such person

or persons, alive or dead, and the former for preference, or giveth such intelligence as will lead to their capture, alive or dead, and the former for preference, will be suitably and well rewarded.

“Moreover, whosoever knowingly and with intent affords shelter to such person or persons, or aids in escape, will be punished according to law and his possessions forfeit.

“Lastly, know, all men, that this is the manner of man who may be looked for: tall and of great stature, in very ordinary dress, a fast runner, and having a pistol and perchance a bloody knife.

“Intelligence of such a man or others like him to be lodged at the town-house or with the guard.

“By order of the Magistrates and Council.

“GOD SAVE THE KING.”

I read all this through, but it was only when I came to the end that I found why such a notice should have caused such excitement and gathered such a crowd. Placards of similar import were well-nigh as common as brambles in October, but as I looked I saw there was more in this bill.

“God save the King,” said the proclamation, but below this, in great sprawling writing, thick and coarse, was that which spelled treason and was the cause of all the uproar.

“God save the King,” I read again, and below it came these words, “*and damn the wee German Lairdie.*”

CHAPTER XII

THAT WHICH CAME OUT OF THE COFFIN

THE sight sent a thrill through me, for it must have been a bold man who had thus stated his opinions, and, whatever be one's leanings, such a deed is sure to stir the blood. And yet this defiance could not be called unexpected. The cloud had been gathering, small at first as a man's hand, but now rushing deep and dark to rain and thunder—to the rain of bullets and the thunder of artillery. We knew already that the clans were armed and the north-west of England in a ferment. We had heard rumours that the Chevalier was to sail with a great force from France. There had been tales of secret meetings in London, and the coming and going of priests and spies. We had seen munition of war passing to the castle, and had noted the strengthening of the garrison, and yet life had gone on very much in the same way as before; but these few words seemed like the torch to the fire, or the slow match to the touch-hole. Here in broad daylight, in the centre of the Scottish capital, was writ on government paper a curse on the Elector of Hanover and a proclamation of the Stuart. It was no wonder that folk came flocking to the guard-house, and that word had been sent to the Provost.

I stood a moment, taking in the full meaning of the ill-written scrawl and hearing the talk of the crowd, half of whom could not read and were eager to find from others what was ado, and then suddenly a voice called out, in clear, ringing tones.—

“For the King ower the water, hip, hip!”

A deep-toned roar, which, however, was only half a cheer, rose from the mob, and then, as if this had been a signal, they began to scatter, to melt away, going silently and

quickly, as if ashamed of, or scared at the outburst; and I went with them, till Pittendreigh gripped me by the arm, and began whispering in my ear.

"What think you of that?" said he, and looking at him I saw his face was all aglow, his eyes sparkling, his mouth twitching, and I began to understand. I remembered he had seen the notice first, and that when the street was deserted, and like a flash it dawned upon me that Adam Pittendreigh was a Jacobite and had written the curse. I felt strangely uncomfortable and ill at ease, for I was a quiet and easy-going mortal as a rule, and this put a new complexion on affairs with a vengeance. I had never, since leaving Erkinholme, given the matter serious thought; but ere I could reply a harsh voice called out to me, and turning, I beheld Doctor Solid, who had spurred, or rather kicked his horse abreast of us, and now sat leaning over his beast's neck with an eager look on his face. The moment old Adam saw him he made off alone up the street, and Doctor Solid looked after him with a very curious smile hovering about the corners of his thin-lipped mouth.

"Good-day, Master Oliphant," said he, "what is all this about? I could scarce decipher the proclamation, but I heard the call. It sounds serious, does it not? What says the writing?"

"It has to do with some murder or other," I answered carelessly, though my heart was thudding against my ribs, "but it has been added to by someone who curses the Elector."

"The King," said he sternly.

"Or the King," said I, "though the fellow has a pious wish for him. But pardon me, I am in haste."

"Good-day then," said he, jerking sharply at his bridle, "I shall see you anon at the college," and he trotted off downhill.

I called out after him that Doctor Elliot was ill, but I do not think he heard, for the town drum had begun to beat at the guard-house, and its noisy, humming rattle drowned my words.

I set off after Pittendreigh, who was twirling his cane right gaily and humming a tune to himself.

"So," he said, as I reached him, "dost think you are in



THE OLD MAN OF THE TOWN SQUARE

danger? A proper description, is it not? By my marrow bones, they are a pretty lot. They would have us catch a fellow who they say is like every second man we meet in the street, and if by the grace of God they did get him they would shut him up in yon auld rickle o' stanes, which can no more hold a prisoner than a toothless man can hold an oyster in his mouth. Guid sakes, and these be our rulers!"

He made no allusion to the writing, and I took care not to mention it, acting like some bird or other of which I have heard, that hides its head when hunted, and so fancied there is no danger. Thus I kept myself in the dark, and thought to rest secure.

I was in no humour for work the rest of that day, and in the evening went round to the Potterrow, but found my henchmen, as old Adam called them, were on duty in the town, and so I could not thank black Donald as I had intended. I had pretty well got over my fears by this time, and indeed could scarce believe I had been a chief actor in the tragedy which had necessitated the posting of the placard. I took good care, however, to mention it to no one else, not even to Mr. Callender, who was as much of a gossip as Pittendreigh but had not the latter's caution and craftiness.

The next day I found Doctor Elliot no better, and I was very disconsolate and out of spirits. I went to the college, which was deserted, the students finding time pass more agreeably in talking over this latest sensation in the tavern or at Luckie Ketchen's shop than in listening to me trying to interest them in the branches of a vessel or the vagaries of a nerve. I had betaken myself again to my book on surgery, when, according to promise, Doctor Solid came in upon me, his soft footfall and the creak of the door causing me to look up and behold his yellow face and sneering smile.

"I hear," said he, "that my good friend Doctor Elliot is ill. I am much grieved."

He did not look so, I thought, but I told him he had heard rightly.

"What may be the nature of his disorder?" he asked.

I told him this also, and he gave me a lecture upon it,

and was so interesting that I lost the feeling of repulsion he usually aroused in me.

"Mental trouble sorely aggravates such a complaint," he said. "Think you, has the good doctor anything on his mind?"

I did not like his oily way of speaking, so I answered, shortly enough, that he was of course worried at being unfit for his work.

"Ah!" said Doctor Solid, "I would I could prove of service, but you see I am called south. Yes, I must leave in a day or so, otherwise"—

"There is not much left undone," said I, "and had I but material I might make shift to show them the parts; and there is always Doctor Crawford."

"Just so," said he, "just so; your difficulty then is the old one." He paused, and began drumming with his forefinger upon one of the tables, and somehow or other this action gave me a feeling of disquiet, for which I could not account. It recalled something to my mind, but what I could not tell.

"It strikes me," he said at length, "you have little energy here."

"Sir!" I replied, with perchance a touch of hauteur.

"I mean," he said quickly, his voice sounding harsher and more dissonant than ever, "we in London have no such difficulties."

"Indeed," said I.

"Yes, indeed," said he; "for when we have we surmount them."

"How, pray?" I asked.

He leaned towards me, took me by the lappets of my coat, and whispered in my ear.

I had known well enough what he was going to say, but his words sent me striding restlessly up and down the room, for the same idea had before now passed through my own brain but had not taken root.

"Do you know, sir," said I, "that the last time this was done the rabble well-nigh dinged the college down about our lugs? At least I was not here, but so I have been told."

"There are right and wrong ways of doing everything," said he. "Why, we have no such chances as you have."

"This very day I was in that churchyard hard by—how call you it?"

"Greyfriars, you mean?"

"So, and there in a corner they were shovelling away some poor unclaimed wretch in most indecent haste, with about three feet of earth on the top of him and not a prayer by the grave."

"We have no such custom in Scotland," said I, with a curious feeling of pride.

"So? well it seems to me scant courtesy, though it matters little unless you be a Papist; but three feet—why, we have never less than six to get through, and yet"—

"Enough, sir," said I; "it would mean our ruin, and cannot be done."

"It should be a good place too of a dark night," he went on, paying no heed to my words, "away in that angle by the west wall, where there is waste ground and no headstones; but, as I thought," he was sneering now, "you are a poor lot here, with little of real interest and a great love for your own skins," and he rose from the stool.

"Sir," I shouted, "you lie!" for his manner was vile.

"Prove it," he answered, with a grating chuckle, "and pray give my regrets to my good friend Doctor Elliot," and while I stood looking after him, with clenched fists and an angry face, the door creaked again, and he was gone.

But he had left his idea behind him.

I could not get it out of my head, though I scouted it as wicked and impossible. And yet I began to argue with myself. He had spoken of an unclaimed body. Now this, by right of previous agreement, should have been ours. We had been robbed of our due, and surely to take what no one wanted, and no one cared about, was not a crime. Besides, it might be the saving of our school. I had to some extent become affected with Doctor Elliot's enthusiasm. Already that strange fascination which Auld Reekie exercises upon her sons, that glamour of romance, sentiment, what you will, which she casts about those who dwell within her walls had laid hold upon me. I took a pride in the old grey city, dull and stricken though it was, and that pride extended to its customs and institutions. And now one of the latest of those was threatened with extinction,

and perchance it was ordained that I should save it. Moreover, Doctor Solid's words had left their sting behind. Were Scotchmen to fail where Englishmen succeeded? I could fancy how he would sneer and jibe on his return if he found the tables still bare. And lastly, there was poor Doctor Elliot to be considered. He need not know how we had come by the subject, but it would please him to learn we were not idle in his absence, and might even help to cure him; for had not Doctor Solid said that mental worry would assuredly make him worse?

"The thing was worth doing," I said to myself, and suddenly I brought my hand slap down upon my thigh.

"And it shall be done," I added, "come what may."

But it was one thing to make up my mind to do the deed, and quite another to plan out how it should be done. At first I thought of the students, Cuddy Whinger and his band, but I soon saw that they would never do. They were a drunken lot, and would no doubt babble out the whole affair over their cups, and set the mob swarming round us like bees from a hive. What is more, the last time they had a hand in such a delicate matter they had made a mess of it, and, as I have said, the college itself had narrowly escaped destruction. I might approach Boddie, but the man, no doubt owing to his ghoulish work, was a silent soaker, and lacked nerve and courage, while I did not fancy his pitted face and hoarse voice for company on a dark night by a lonely graveside.

And then I suddenly bethought myself of the Campbells, and their oath of fealty; they were bound by some terrible vow to aid me in any venture whatsoever, and I became convinced they were the men for the task. Moreover, they were in the guard, and not likely to be suspected. The more I thought of it, the more feasible did this plan seem to be, and I resolved that the three great lads should be my helpers.

I was excited now, and the touch of danger in the undertaking was to my liking, though but the day before I had been thinking that I had had enough of adventuring to last me for a year; but escapades are like punch—once get a taste for them, and there is no saying where you may end. For a time I intended to carry out my plan that very

night, but on second thoughts I resolved to wait a day; and in any case I found that it would not have been dark enough to favour my designs. Instead, however, I marked the spot, and found that Doctor Solid had spoken truly; and I examined the walls, and discovered a convenient place for scaling them, the great gates being shut at night, and the place left to the lonely dead and the prowling cats which flocked hither from the Row and the Grassmarket.

I slept but little, for my brain was busy, and I imagined every sort of terror, and dreamed I was buried alive in place of the wretched being whose rest I had disturbed. So vile a time did I have that my resolution wavered, but with daylight came fresh courage. I began to grow dour, and after this condition comes upon me it is but rarely I deviate from the path I have set myself to tread, which feature in my character has its good and bad sides, nor do I know which of these preponderates, as old Adam would have put it.

At the very beginning, however, I was nearly in despair. I had the good luck to find my henchmen at home and off duty, and indeed they were in what was, for them, a jovial state, their chief, the great Duke, being expected shortly. They had thus hopes of quitting their uncongenial task and getting a chance of letting blood out of some of their hereditary foes; therefore they were very busy polishing weapons of war when I looked in upon them. They rose and saluted me gravely, as was their custom, and I went craftily to work, first thanking Donald Dhu, through his brother, for his act on the night of my flight, and then speaking sorrowfully of Doctor Elliot, who, indeed, was worse. And at last, slowly and cannily, I veered round to my point. I even gave them an oration on the value of the knowledge of anatomy, citing their mother's case, at which they grunted very heartily and saluted again.

But when I got to my request I could scarce get Kenneth to tell them my meaning, and when I did, their consternation was something remarkable. I had forgotten these men were Celts, full of all manner of superstition and weird folk-lore, and my proposal appalled them. Kenneth was well-nigh as scared as his brothers, and said "it could

not be done." I argued and better argued, I pleaded, but all in vain. I was answered by solemn headshakes and many a hooch and hoch. But the more stubborn they were the more resolved was I upon having my own way. Kenneth at last became more amenable to reason, but only when I showed him the wildness and danger of the scheme. The others remained obdurate, and yet I needed their help. At last it struck me that bold measures were best. I got upon my feet and poured out a torrent of reproach upon them. Words came so easily that I began to think I had mistaken my vocation and should have gone in for the Kirk. I vowed they were chicken-hearted, I taunted them, I spat upon them for Highland dogs, and though Kenneth had no time to tell them half I said, I began to see that my tone and bearing were beginning to make an impression. I redoubled my efforts, laughed them to scorn for their broken vow, pointed to their aged mother, who, deaf as a post, sat and blinked at the fire-light, and finally, in a burst of passion, ordered them to do my bidding, and I won. I had, by good fortune, taken the right way with them, and though they were clearly uneasy and even miserable, they swore to meet me at eleven of the clock if the night was dark, and I knew they were conquered.

I hurried away, flushed and heated, and further matured my plans. I procured a pick and two shovels, a sack and cord, and a coil of rope, and I had arranged with them to bring a lantern. I even went the length of making up a specious tale in case of discovery. I resolved to give out that I was after the body of the man who had been murdered, in the hopes of finding the bullet and tracing the assassin, and I trusted the uniform of the Campbells would give reality to my tale. Not that I had the least idea where the unfortunate man I saw shot had found a grave, if, indeed, he had been buried. He must be dead, or they would not have called it murder; but so fertile was my brain just then that I had half a dozen other stories to suit various awkward occasions which I imagined.

At last everything was ready, and I waited in a fever of impatience for nightfall. I had in my possession a key of the room of dissection, and I had taken that of the college

gates from the bunch Boddie wore at his girdle ; for he had been fuddled all day, and I might have taken his clothes as well and left him none the wiser.

I did not go near Pittendreigh, for I knew his keen eye would have seen my restlessness, and I doubted whether he would have approved this action of mine ; for he was very strict upon certain points, despite his usual levity. Gradually the evening wore on, though the hours dragged miserably. At last night came, and to my joy I found it such a night as I desired. It was one we often have in the north—a night of scudding cloud and small rain. To be sure there was a moon, but she was in her first quarter, and was very pale and watery. Still, now and then, she cast a dim and flickering light, so that shadows, like gaunt, black ghosts, seemed to haunt the ground, coming from nowhere, and then vanishing into deep obscurity and gloom. It was a night upon which one feels shivers down the back, hears his own footsteps too loudly, and glances in fear behind, and it seemed as though made for the dark deed I had on hand. I sat and listened.

Ten boomed in sullen strokes, and the clang seemed to be whisked away upon the autumn wind, which moaned and whistled as it came upon the city from the lonely Borough moor and the reedy loch. It was in truth a horrid night, and I shivered as I waited.

At last I rose and crept silently forth, going to the place where I had hidden the things, a half-ruined cottage not far from the Bristo Port. I found them safe and untouched, and all that was wanted now was the advent of my helpers. They came just at eleven of the clock, but I started when I saw them. They had discarded their uniforms, and each wore the kilt and had a plaid of faded tartan wrapped round him, while their heads were bare. In a whisper Kenneth told me they would not come at all if they might not come like this, for they felt more at their ease and could run better if need be ; and there was nothing for it but to submit. At any other time I should have laughed at them. They were in mortal fear, their wild eyes roaming about, while they started at the slightest sound, and more than once all three made the sign of the cross, a remnant of the old days when Rome held sway,

though they were, as far as they went, as good Presbyters as myself. To be sure, I was not in much better case, but I kept my feelings more under control, and led the way to the kirkyard wall.

It was an easy enough matter for four such men as we were to scale it, and in a trice we were inside.

Even yet I can remember the thoughts which chased through my mind as we stole across the open, our feet swishing through the long, dank, soaking grass, and catching now and then on sunken and forgotten stones.

What a place this was! Here, no doubt, lay the ashes of the jolly friars, who long, long ago had roared their choruses, and grown fat, and fasted whiles, and passed away, leaving the world much as they found it. Here slept half the folk who had lived in the town yonder, quiet enough now after all their toil and bickerings. In one corner I well knew rested the bones of the brave, dour, and pious men who had "glorified God in the Grass-market," dying for Christ's crown and Covenant, and perhaps as much as anything because they were Scots, and would not have things thrust down their throats; but of such men nations are made.

And here also, in sure hope of something very different from a blessed resurrection, reposed the remains of those who had persecuted them, the bloody Mackenzie and his crew; and yet, perchance, some day folk will say these were right and the others wrong, for so the world wags.

Away to the left was the long alley of death from which Mat Kerr had won clear, and which looked now as though it had never witnessed scenes that might have wrung a tear from hearts of stone.

What sights this strange old God's acre had witnessed! And yet I doubt if ever before it had seen what it saw that night: four men beyond the ordinary size of men, three in a wild, half savage garb, stealing along in the rain, the sweat standing out upon their faces, and their breath coming harshly from between their teeth. They hid themselves in shadow as the moon's face cleared, and crept forwards as the dark scud swept across the crescent. Lean cats now and then scuttled from under flat tombs, and the hearts of those men stood in their

mouths as the long-drawn yell of feline battle smote upon their ears; for there is no more eerie sound than the wail of the tom-cat in the dead of night. At last they reached a spot where the grass grew longer and ranker than elsewhere, where ivy, brown and sere, clung to a crumbling wall and rustled in the breeze, the raindrops pattering upon the leaves.

"This is the place," I whispered. "Now let us be quick; the sooner it is done, the sooner away."

"Diaoul!" groaned Malcolm More, whose face was white as a winding sheet.

Fears were forgotten, however, as work began. The spades cut the loose turf and cast it aside, and soon pick and shovels were thudding into the damp, black earth, which smelt as only kirkyard earth can smell. Down and down, till Donald and Malcolm stood in a gaping hole up to the waist; down and down, till there came a dull, heavy sound of metal upon wood. The mools flew fast, first to one side and then to the other, for brawny arms were at work, and there was a wild excitement in thus desecrating the place of the dead. A flop, a scrape, the top of a black box came into view, and the lantern cast a ghostly yellow gleam upon it, lying snugly, as it seemed, amongst the lumpy clods, which trickled down upon it as we stared at it and paused a moment.

"Free the sides," said I, "and, Kenneth, do you stand by with the rope." His teeth chattered, and a gust of angry wind caused the lantern flame to sway and flicker, but he did as he was bid.

"Gently now," I whispered, and yet could scarce speak at all, my tongue feeling sticky and my throat closed up, while my jaw waggled of its own accord. They made a signal that all was right, and clambered out. We pulled upon the cords, and slowly the coffin left its bed and rose into the stronger light. Up it came till we had it free of the pit, and then, a squeal, a rush, and a night prowler, no doubt pursued, came scuttling down from the top of the wall amongst the ivy, flashed through the yellow rays, and sped away in terror, with eyes like live coals and a tail like a bottle-brush.

We started, as was no wonder, and involuntarily loosed our hold upon the ropes. With a heavy thud the coffin

came to earth. Even yet, old fool that I am, the remembrance of what followed comes to me in the night watches, and I cower amongst the bedclothes and shut my eyes tightly, while the hair bristles on my head.

There was a creaking sound, a sort of snap, as when a door-bolt shoots back, and then up flew the black lid, and up sprang something white and shapeless, which swayed a moment, jerked backwards, and collapsed. A low moan, the outcome of the greatest mental agony and fear, burst from the pale lips of these three great lads of mine, and with one accord they turned and fled, and so did I. They sped in front of me at a prodigious rate, leaping over tombstones, their heads down, their elbows far back, and their kilts streaming behind them.

They reached the wall, and no cat in all the town could have gone over it as they did. There was a whisk of tartan, three huge figures outlined against the black of night, and they were gone.

They were gone and I was left, for I had stopped in my mad career. I had been scared, and no shame to me, for what I had seen would have scared anything with nerves, but I was not beaten. It would be madness to leave traces of our handiwork behind us, and I had to go back. And yet, God knows, that retreat was the most terrible thing of all. In the end I ran back at a rush, and, to make things worse, found the lantern had gone out. I had flint and steel with me, but it took ten minutes to get a light, and all that time I crouched in a corner of the wall, while close to me was I knew not what: nor could I tell when someone might come upon me, for there had been enough noise made to rouse half the Row of the Candlemakers. At last my shaking hands did their work, and as soon as the lantern glowed again I grew cool and walked to the grave. Everything was as I had left it, and I soon saw what had happened. The body was long and large, and had clearly been hastily crammed into a coffin too small for it, and what with the force of the blow had burst the top open, and strangely enough, being yet rigid, had for a moment shot upwards and then fallen back. It was nothing wonderful, but it had nearly cost me my wits, and I was confident had given my poor henchmen the shivers for a week. No doubt you

fancy I tumbled everything into the hole, and shovelled in the earth and stamped it flat, and replaced the sods, and hurried away ; but if so, you are wrong. I was going to get what I had come for now, or I knew the reason why, and I was going to shame those wild Highlandmen. And so, half an hour later, I might have been seen at the wall with sack, and rope, and cord, and pick, and shovels, while I had the lantern fastened to my coat. It had been hard work, but I had done it, and now harder was to come. I propped the sack, which bulged and was very heavy, against the wall, and, mounting the stones, lay upon the top and tried to reach it. I could not do so.

I fastened the rope to the sack, and tried to raise it. I failed, for it was too heavy for my arms. I lowered myself upon the other side and pulled upon the rope. In vain. I got into the kirkyard again, and wondered what I should do next. I was in a fix, and could have cursed my folly. After all, was I to give up?

“No!” I said to myself, “a thousand times no!” and then I saw what I must do, little as I liked to do it, for the only man to help me in this extremity was Pittendreigh the Godless.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT I FOUND IN THE BODY, AND THE ROAR OF THE RABBLE

NOT a moment did I waste after I had come to this conclusion, though I was none too sure of my reception at his hands. Howbeit, this was neither the time nor place for such doubtings, and so I dragged the sack and other things into a dark and convenient corner, and hid them amongst a bed of tall and ragged nettles. Then over the wall I went, and without meeting a soul reached the house which sheltered old Adam's grey but youthful pate. I slipped up the stair on tiptoe, and hoped I might be able to wake him quietly and without danger to myself, for I never dreamed but that he was dreaming also, or at anyrate asleep, it being long past midnight. To my surprise, I saw through the door chinks that there was a light in his room. I tapped gently and entered, but recoiled next moment, for the round, black muzzle of a bell-mouthed pistol met my gaze, with Mr. Pittendreigh squinting along the barrel, and behind him a table littered with papers, some sealed, some open.

"Guid sakes," said he, seeing who I was, and lowering his weapon, to my great comfort, "what the muckle deil d'ye mean disturbing honest folk at this hoor o' the nicht, when every decent man's abed?"

"Then what may you be?" said I, pointing to the table.

"Hoots," said he, "every rule maun hae its exceptions, and this may be a wee bit o' a drama I have in ma heid and am now transcribing."

"It may be," I answered, "but I doubt it. However, that is none of my affair, and I have come for your help, if you will grant the same, in a matter of the greatest urgency."

"Will it no' keep?" said he. "I'm fell busy, my boy."

"No," said I, with perchance a double meaning in my

words, "it will not keep," and then I told him hurriedly of my escapade.

He heard me in silence, but his face bore testimony to his interest and excitement.

"By my marrow bones," he whispered, when I came to an end, "heard anyone the like o' this? And yet, what have I missed! Over the wall they went, you say?"

I nodded.

"Kilts and all?"

Again I nodded.

"S death," said he, "I would not have missed this for a pension o' buckies! My curse be on you for not giving me the chance. But ay, ay, back you maun needs come to auld Adam at the end to get you out o' the fix. I doubt me if I'll go a step wi' siccan an ungrateful vagabond."

"Sir," said I, "for God's sake"—

"Awa' wi' ye," he cried, "dinna misca' yoursel'. And ye want this sack ta'en tae the college?"

"Yes, yes," I whispered wildly, for I was growing scared again, "but quick; someone may find it, and then"—

He made the sign of a circle round his own neck, poked me in the ribs, and turned up his eyes.

"It is no jest," I pleaded.

"Not for the dead man," said he. "But bide easy, it's no' likely I'm going to lose an experience like this; twa resurrections don't fall to the lot of every man. But there's no manner o' hurry. I have it," he cried suddenly, and began dragging clothes out of his big kist.

"Your plan micht hae dune verra weel when ye had three muckle men tae help ye, and the nicht was darker than it is the noo, but if we fell foul o' any curious folk they micht want tae see the inside o' your sack, and small blame tae them, and we would need tae sink or swim taegither. Look you, I hae an auld suit, maistly holes, but joined here and there by a wheen bits o' cloth stuff; sae come on, ye ghou!—" and making a bundle of the clothes, he led the way out, leaving his lamp burning, but closing the door.

"An alibi," said he, jerking his thumb at it over his shoulder, and chuckling to himself.

I followed, with a vague idea of what he meant to do; but I guided him to the spot, and managed to hoist him

over the wall, which was a trifle high for him, active though he was. I dragged out the things, feeling very vile and very wicked for the first time, and then together, with a chill of horror on my part, we emptied the sack.

"Tut, tut," said old Adam, "is't no' sad to see a weel-faured mon in siccan a state? We maun get him hame. But let this be a lesson tae ye, Allan, ma lad, tae hae naethin' tae dae wi' the drink."

"The drink?" I whispered, wondering if he had gone daft.

"To be sure," he snapped. "The man maun be gey cauld; here, help on wi' his claites, and be hanged tae ye! Ye dinna seem tae like the work o' the gude Samaritan."

I saw what he meant, and guessed his plan, while he evidently saw that my nerves were all in a quiver, and was trying to steady them in a way of his own.

I gave a hoarse sob of a laugh, and we dressed what had come out of the sack—dressed it in less time than the best valet ever took to dress his master, while old Adam kept talking to himself all the while, only now and then rating me for not fastening a button properly, or speaking to the thing we held when it swayed overmuch, or proved troublesome by reason of stiffness. The rain had ceased now and the night had cleared, which made our work all the ghastlier, till the horrid whiteness was shrouded from the moon's rays, save where it showed through some rent or tear, or in the part above the coat collar and in front.

At last we finished, and I hoisted Adam to the top of the wall again, and then took hold of something having a similar shape but greater weight, and hoisted that also, while he pulled from above. Three minutes later three figures, the middle one hatless, very helpless and very stumbling, the tallest carrying a curious bundle, and the other growling in a low voice at both his companions, passed arm in arm silently down the steep Row, and turned to the right once and then again. Had any sleepless wight looked out upon us he would no doubt have thought, "Three drunken fellows, who differ only in degree"; but had he seen the face of one of them he would have had no rest that night, and perchance not for many a night thereafter.

"Thank God," I said at last, "that is safely over!"

We stood in the long, bare, low-roofed room, its corners

thrown into deep shadow by the feeble, smoky light of a candle stuck in a bottle's neck. From one of them gleamed the bony framework of what had once been a man, and very eerie looked the dried and withered specimens hanging from the roof, one above the candle flame circling slowly round and round, as no doubt you have seen a spiral do when hung by a thread above a lamp.

There was a change in the room, however, since the night before, for one of the tables was again covered by the coarse sheet, and that sheet did not lie flat upon it, for it shrouded the body of the poor unknown who had lain in the lonely corner of old Greyfriars, and yet afterwards had taken a midnight walk with two companions through the deserted streets and up the College Wynd.

"That is safely over," said I, and wiped away the great beads of trickling sweat which stood out upon my forehead, and drew a long breath of heartfelt relief.

"Ay," said Pittendreigh drily, "it is over, but whether safely or not time will show. And now, look you, Allan, I have helped you this night, for the thing was half done and it was better to finish it in this way, nor do I deny that I have not relished such an experience, but here and now you shall vow to me that never again will you take a hand in such devilish work, for there is no other name for this howking of dead folks from their graves."

For a moment my pride rose in rebellion at being thus ordered, but I had gone through enough to last me for a lifetime, and I gave the promise readily, while to this day I take myself to task for that wild deed; albeit, perhaps, it was justified by the circumstances, and I thought or said nothing dishonourable to the dead.

It would be easy enough to trick Boddie, I felt, considering his condition; and so we stayed no longer than was necessary, but made off, locking doors and gates behind us, and I had ten separate shivers down my spine ere I crept miserably to bed, but not to sleep. I saw the grey of the morning come, I heard the sleepy twittering of the house sparrows as they woke to a sense of hunger, I heard the early carts, laden with vegetables from the farms and gardens beyond the Flodden wall, pass creaking and rumbling down the Row, but my thoughts were away amongst the mools and the ivy

and the nettle beds of the cold kirkyard, and I lay in fear and trembling, and rose haggard and unrefreshed. I could eat but little, and my first business was to look up my false henchmen. I found them still scared, but penitent and shamefaced, and they swore freely when they heard that *an t-amadan beag*¹ had done what they had left unfinished. However, it seemed they had reached home unseen, and so I graciously pardoned them; and they took the vow again, and this time I knew that, come what might, their oath would never be broken.

On the whole I had been fortunate. I had done what I said I would do, and, so far as I knew, no one likely to prove an enemy had seen me. It struck me that after all the ring o' luck, my mother's parting gift, must have some power, for well-nigh everything had prospered with me. Had I not been robbed by the rogue at the "Magpie," for whom, by the way, I was keeping a sharp lookout, I had never tried to breakfast at the "White Horse" and fallen in with Pittendreigh. Had I not known Pittendreigh I had never in all likelihood set foot in Jamie Callender's and been noticed by Doctor Elliot; and had the latter not seen and fancied me, I might have whistled for the college.

"Yes," said I to myself, "there is something in this," and I took it out of the little side pocket of my coat in which I kept it, and stared hard at it, though there was nothing in any way curious or special about it. I was on my road to the room of dissection by this time, and I entered it, to find Boddie scratching his coarse-haired head, and gazing dully at the outline on the table. He grunted when he saw me, but I pretended that everything was as usual, and he must clearly have put down his ignorance of this new and welcome arrival to his besotted state, for he did not ask for an explanation, though he seemed on the point of doing so more than once. I waited till he was clear of the room, for there was still a shroud about the body, which all last night had been to me nothing but a length of erinkled white cloth of a certain shape, as high as the shoulders, and the face I had scarce looked at, for a reason not far to seek. Now, however, my fears were gone, and I found before me the corpse of a man in the prime of life, of powerful build, his face remark-

¹ The little lunatic.

ably bloodless, but swarthy for all that, while, to my surprise, he had small, thin circles of gold fixed in his ear lobes. His hair was black and very curly, and he had a tuft of jet-coloured beard between his lower lip and purple-hued chin, and I felt convinced that he must have been a very handsome man in life and probably a foreigner. He was well nourished, and I wondered how he had come by his death, for there was no mark of violence to be seen, he had no fever spotting, or swelling, or dropsy, while his artery walls were soft to the touch, and had not that pipe-stem feeling which tells of danger and forebodes the end.

Even in death he had a fine, strong, resolute face; not the wearied, sunken countenance I was wont to see upon the tables, or the bloated and bleared visage which came to us more rarely. He looked as though he had been a leader in his day, and had found the world stern but himself sterner. I could not help feeling a strange interest in him, and I was noting all these points, when the door gave that creak I knew so well, and Doctor Solid, habited as of old, stole softly in upon us. For the first time I was pleased at sight of him. He had taunted me and dared me, but I had been too many for him; he had sneered, but now the sneer would be on the wrong side of his mouth. I did not reply to his morning's greetings. Puffed up with pride, I merely waved my arm very grandly towards the table, feeling now well rewarded for my night's work.

"I await your apology, sir," said I.

He smiled grimly.

"So?" he said, and coming forward he peered at the corpse.

"Yes," said I, a trifle put out at his coolness; but he paid no heed to me.

"Are you aware that I spoke, sir?"

"You said"—

"I said I await your apology."

"Just so, and"—

"Well?"

"You still await."

"Sir!" I shouted, angered at his bearing.

"Softly," said he, in his grating tones. "I spoke to you of an unknown man buried in that churchyard close at hand."

"You did," I answered, "and here he is."

"Pardon me," he replied, "you are mistaken."

"Mistaken?" I gasped, wondering if I had heard aright.

"Even so," said he. "Have you seen the placards describing the man who was murdered the other night?"

"No," I stammered, "I have not."

"I thought not," said he, "for if they have a grain of truth in them, *this is the man.*"

I stared at him speechless, and from him to the pale face of the subject, and from that to his long, yellow visage again.

"Nevertheless," I said slowly, for I was still trying to grasp the full meaning of his words, "I raised this body last night from the spot you told me of by the wall."

"I do not doubt your veracity for a moment," he said, with a bow and a covert sneer, "but it seems you have raised the wrong man."

"It is impossible," I cried; "they would never have buried him with the placards only posted this morning; they would have kept him to be identified; they"—

"Pardon me," he said again, "has not the weather been sultry these past two days? and look there! Besides, dost think there would have been any need of a description if the subject of it could have been seen? But it is easy to make sure. The man, if I mistake not, was shot in the back, and a bullet leaves a mark, Master Oliphant. Let us look at the dorsum."

We looked, and there could be no doubt, for there was the tiny bluish spot and the puckered skin about the hole which had let out a life. I sat down upon a stool and passed my cuff across my forehead, for after my sleepless night this came as a heavy shock, and it never struck me that it might have been the burial of this man which he had witnessed.

So here was the being I had seen stalking in all his strength and vigour down the High Street; this was the man who had been killed in cold blood by the very villain who had played me a scurvy trick. I felt a sort of link between me and the dead whom I had seen die, and the strangeness of the thing kept me rooted to my seat.

"This was a tale for Pittendreigh," I thought vaguely, but little thought that I ran great risk of never seeing that worthy again in this world. Moreover, had I not made up a tale about raising this very poor wretch before me, a

specious story, to save myself if need be? And now it had recoiled upon my own head with a vengeance. I had lifted this body, and God alone knew whether it might not be the means of lifting me—lifting me till I danced a tattoo in thin air, swinging at a rope's end.

"And yet, why should it?" I asked myself. Who was to know I had snatched the wrong body from the grave? who was to know I had snatched any body at all, save, indeed, the trusty Campbells, old Adam, and this man, who now stood drumming with his forefinger upon the table? And again this action set me wondering why it made me fear and hate Doctor Silas Solid for the time being.

I was safe enough if this man kept his mouth shut, and I looked at him doubtfully as he stood opposite me, his pale pig-like eyes fixed upon the corpse.

He looked up, and seemed to read me at a glance.

"You need not fear me," he said; "but all will no doubt be pardoned if you can do the State a service."

"You speak in riddles," I answered, cudgelling my brain for his meaning.

"So? you are very dull to-day, though perhaps there is a reason for that. But look you, the bullet has entered, but where is its exit? There is none, therefore it is within; and before now a bullet has cost two lives, finishing them, however, in different ways."

"To be sure," I said eagerly; and indeed this was what had passed through my mind the previous night when I made up my tale, as no doubt you will remember.

"From its direction," said he, "I opine it must be in or near the stomach, and it may have injured the spine, the vessel, or the plexus. This is most interesting."

"We had better see," said I.

"Stay a moment," he went on; "will it not spoil the dissection? What would Doctor Elliot say?"

"True," I answered, "but the case is exceptional." And indeed I was keen to bring the dark villain with the chin-patch to justice, if it could be done; while if there was nothing special about the bullet nothing need be said, and in any case, one might pretend to have found it on the street near the spot where the murder had been committed.

"Well," said Doctor Solid, "I should have been sorry to

have put this idea in your head did I think my good friend Master Elliot would object."

"By no means," I said quickly and almost rudely; "the idea was there long before you came."

He started visibly when I said this, and looked at me in a very curious fashion; and I remembered afterwards that his hand stole within his coat, but I paid no heed to this at the time.

"It would have made an excellent excuse," I explained, and he smiled as though relieved. No doubt he was glad to find I was not crazed, as my words may have led him to believe I was.

"Of course," he said, "you are in charge; but had you not better ask leave?"

"Not at all," I answered loftily; "it would but worry Doctor Elliot, and Boddie is out."

"That is so," he said gravely. "You have no objections to my being here? It is best to have two witnesses."

"None," said I, and fetched a bistoury.

"There is something, you say?"

Doctor Solid started from his stool and looked eagerly at me.

"Why, yes," I replied; "I feel something hard, but it is a strange bullet."

"Ah! no doubt it has struck the vertebræ and so been altered."

"We shall soon see, for here it is," I cried, as excited as he was, and with that I brought out something between my thumb and forefinger. "Great heavens!" I muttered, as I looked at it, "this is no bullet."

"Indeed," said Doctor Solid, who was stretching over the table and peering at me from under his long, whitish lashes, "what is it then?"

"It is a ring," I answered, "a signet," and as I said so it slipped, fell to the floor, and rolled under the table towards him.

He had picked it up in a moment, and began examining it, so that I could not see it properly.

"Very strange," he said, "passing strange! What can it mean?"

"A queer supper for a man," said I.

"Truly; but I doubt if this was eaten at leisure."

"Ah!" I cried suddenly, remembering how the man had gulped when he lay dying, and then I stopped, confused.

"Well?" said Doctor Solid, looking at me sharply.

"I thought I heard a noise," I answered, truly enough, for there was a curious, distant hum which came to my ears through the open skylight.

"So?" he said, and cocked his head on one side, as if listening. "I hear nothing."

"It is gone just now; but pray let me have the ring."

"Not so fast, young sir," he said, putting his hand which held it behind his back. "This should be delivered to the authorities."

"It is for me to deliver."

"Perchance," he said.

"Without doubt," I answered; "though it is really Doctor Elliot's."

"The bullet is likely to be of more importance," he went on, giving a little dry cough; "and in any case it would come better from me, and would shield you; and besides, afterwards I shall buy it for my collection."

I stood aghast at his cool proposal.

"I assure you my collection is the most curious in England."

"The ring," I said stolidly, "belongs to Doctor Elliot; you had better hand it over, and at once." I spoke firmly, for I was enraged at his intentions, and he was sneering again; but as I took a step towards him I heard again that deep, humming noise, louder now and broken by other sounds; while, were these footsteps, hurried, as though of men running? He clearly heard it also, and hesitated.

I got between him and the door, while he snarled like a lean and yellow dog, and showed his long white teeth.

"You do not leave the room till I have it," I said quietly, doubling my fists.

"Curse you!" he hissed, "take the—bauble," and he threw it at me.

I stooped, and he made a rush; but ere I could see what he would be at, Cuddy Whinger and half a dozen other students burst in upon us.

"Quick with the stool legs!" roared Cuddy, while some seized thigh bones and threw off their coats.

"What is it?" I shouted, as I slipped the ring into my coat pocket.

"The mob," gasped Cuddy, who was out of breath, "scores of them. D'ye not hear?"

And indeed I did hear.

That hum had changed now into yells and shouts and a deep-throated roar, and like a flash my memory told me the reason of this clamour. My doings were discovered and the rabble had risen, for in my wild haste I had forgotten to return the grave.

They were ever suspicious of our anatomy room, and the most trifling pretext was enough to send them storming up the wynd. No doubt they knew nothing for certain,—indeed they did not, as I afterwards found,—but they had an old crow to pick with us, and here was their chance. I gathered that two or three of the students were holding them in check, and my resolve was taken in an instant. I swept the sheet over the body so that no one could have seen it closely, all being too busy. I called for Boddie, but was told he had joined in the fray, and then, tearing a leg from off a stool, I glanced at Doctor Solid.

His face was inscrutable, but he merely nodded.

"Lead on," said he, in his harsh voice.

"Now, lads," I shouted, "at the villains, and crack their empty skulls for them."

With a cheer we swept out of the room, across the yard and into the wynd, which was blocked by a swaying crowd, who had torn one part of the gate from its hinges.

And such a crowd!

Three of the wildest and biggest students, with Boddie, were fighting desperately, their clothes torn and their faces bleeding, while beyond them were the sweepings of the alleys, the cellar dwellers, and vagabonds of the town.

Coarse, red, angry faces, unshaven and unkempt, glared at us, hoarse and strident voices cursed us, and those behind threw stones over the heads of those in front. There were brawny women in the throng, with arms like butchers' arms and faces like nothing human—"sluts and slatterns frae the slums," as Pittendreigh called them, when I told him of this bicker.

"Doon wi' the body thieves!" shrieked a voice, and this was followed by a cry of pain as the mighty Cuddy, armed

with a long femur, rushed at the enemy and brought the condyles crunching down on heads and arms and shoulders, and hacked his way with his heavy boots into the thickest of the press.

"Back him up! back him up!" was now the cry.

"Come awa', ma bielder boys," yelled the little witty wretch, and darted into Cuddy's wake, only to be seized and half strangled by a great virago of an evil-faced woman, who shook him as a terrier does a rat.

"Crash!" we fell upon them in a fury, striking right and left, and I was speedily swallowed up in an atmosphere which seemed to reek of filth, unwashed clothes, and drink-laden breaths.

It was horrible, but gloriously horrible, and I lost myself for a moment in the mere joy of fighting, in the delight of putting out my utmost strength, in the glory of swinging strong men off their legs and hurling them to the ground, in the wild grapple, choking grip, and crushing blow; but I soon saw this could not last. They outnumbered us, twenty to one, and every close of the Cowgate and entry of the Grassmarket was no doubt spouting out its ragged rascals to their help. I caught sight of Doctor Solid near me doing very valiant deeds, and I wondered if I had misjudged the man, and then we were borne back and farther back, struggling, and breathing hard, and hitting freely, but without avail.

"Gralloch!" I shouted to the little student, who was free again, and who, I well knew, was a fast runner when sober, "come in ahint," and then I shouldered my way to where Cuddy Whinger towered above the press.

"We maun win through, Cuddy," I roared, "and let Gralloch awa' for help."

"Richt ye are!" bellowed Cuddy in my ear, and together we rushed forwards. They gave way before our weight and height, while the slope favoured us, and with stool leg and thigh bone we cleared a path through them, while Gralloch struck out in our rear or clung to our coat tails. We staggered, we stumbled, we sweated and smashed, and somehow we worried through.

"Off wi' ye for the guard," I gasped, and Dick Gralloch sped away like the wind, and we took good care none should stop him at the mouth of the wynd.

Then we fell to again.

CHAPTER XIV

A CALL TO ARMS

WHAT happened thereafter I scarce know. I can remember a sea of angry faces; I can recall hearing the foulest oaths and vilest cries; I recollect striking and better striking, while my breath went from me and my head whirled, and we surged onwards towards the college, which seemed doomed. And then the rabble began to break and run, and I saw a glow of colour at the mouth of the wynd, and fancied I even made out the thud of the musket butts as they beat upon the backs of the flying mob. I only knew that Dick Galloch had fallen in with the Campbells and some others of the guard, who were very well pleased to get a chance of a fight, and made so much noise and played so much havoc that the besiegers fancied the garrison were upon them, and turned tail at once, dragging their wounded with them, which was much to their credit, for half a score of the rogues had gone to earth. On our side, Boddie was all blows and bruises, and Cuddy and I were not in much better plight, while two of the others were stunned and stabbed, and one had his arm broken. We would have suffered more severely, but the rabble had been hampered by the narrowness of the wynd, and they had no weapons with them save a few knives and cudgels, and had used the former but little. The room was saved, and I limped back to it, for I had been cut in the leg. Doctor Solid had vanished, and the others, carrying the wounded, dispersed quickly, fearing they might all be taken and clapped in the Tolbooth. Boddie came with me and set to work to bathc his hurts, and I did the same for myself; but my mind was ill at ease. To be sure the fight had been a short one, but if it got to the ears of the Provost there was likely to be trouble, and no doubt there would

have been trouble had there not been greater trouble elsewhere. The Provost and his brethren of the City Chambers were far too busy and perchance too scared to bother their heads about a rowdy crowd in the Cowgate, for that very day there reached the city the great news that the Earl of Mar had raised the standard of revolt in Braemar, and had proclaimed James eighth of Scotland and third of England and of Ireland. I had heard nothing of this, however, and occupied myself in making plans to cheat the officers of justice. I resolved to take the place of the corpse and feign death, and half a dozen similar mad notions passed through my mind. It was a good thing for me that men's thoughts were diverted at this time, for otherwise I doubt if I could have escaped discovery, ingenious though I was in those days. As I shaped my course the remembrance of Doctor Solid and his eagerness to get the ring into his possession came back to me, and it struck me I had never seen the man in a worse light. He had looked very evil as he faced me, and I recalled how he had leapt at me when I was stooping. To be sure I had seen no weapon in his hands after Cuddy Whinger and the rest had burst in upon us, but that was no reason why he should not have had a knife or pistol concealed about him. But, would a man in Silas Solid's position go the length of stabbing or shooting another merely to gain a curio for his collection? It scarce seemed likely, and yet, what was this Englishman? A physician and an anatomist beyond all doubt, but was he something more? Why had he lingered on in Edinburgh when he must have known that the outlook was stormy, and that there was every chance of a siege ere long?

He had been secretive also as to where he lived. I had shown him a good deal one way or the other, though to be sure not with a very good grace, but I had never set foot across the threshold of his dwelling. I instinctively felt that there was something very mysterious about him, and I had come to the conclusion that he was strong for evil and not for good.

Pittendreigh hated him, and old Adam had a wonderful knowledge of men. I could make nothing of the riddle. It was strange that after being so keen to get

the ring he should have slipped away unseen after the fight.

I felt in my coat pocket, for I had not had time to examine properly this queer relic of the dead; but as I did so I gave a low cry, for where there had been two rings there was now but one.

I drew it out and then whistled to myself and raised my eyebrows, for what had been stolen from me, or what I had lost, was not the great signet I had found in the stomach, but the ring o' luck stamped with the Cameron's clenched fist and dagger, which had been my mother's parting gift.

For a moment I felt pleased, curiosity being strong in me, but very quickly I began to dread this as an ill omen and to have a foreboding of coming danger. I had been lucky with the ring o' luck, as I had been telling myself a few hours before, but what was I to be when there remained alone the ring of the dead? I rushed off to the wynd and searched amongst the stones and in the mud, but nothing did I find save blood-marks, a couple of tattered shoes, a bonnet, and a broken stick. Slowly I took my way back to the room, troubled and perturbed, and when Boddie was absent I drew out this new possession and examined it. It was very massive and large, and had a flat brown stone set in it, on which was some kind of a device, but what I could not tell. I got some coloured wax and took an impression. A mark like a crown was left on the seal with the letter M above it, but it was by no means perfect and told me nothing. I looked for writing, but there was not a scratch on the golden circlet either inside or out. It must have had, ay, and might still have, some secret significance which the poor wretch feared would be discovered, and so in his last agonies he had striven to conceal it for ever, but had failed. I turned it over in my hands, and stared at it long and earnestly. What tales might be mixed up with this piece of gold, what plots and intrigues, what did it portend? All this I thought upon, and then the question came to me, what was I to do with it?

It was Doctor Elliot's by rights. He was ill, however, and the whole story might upset him. I resolved to keep it till he should be better. But had I known then what I know now, had I known all that ring meant, had I dreamed

of the issues which hung upon its safe delivery, had I imagined for a moment what I was doing when I slipped it back into my pocket, I should by no means have made up my mind so easily. I did indeed think of telling Pittendreigh, but deemed it wiser not to do so, why I cannot tell, unless because I liked to hug the secret to myself, and had some vague idea that it might perhaps in some way favour his plans for the restoration of the Stuarts.

Despite all the events which had crowded on me since I had seen the shot fired in the High Street, I had found time to think upon the weighty matters which overshadowed people and country. Since ever I had found how the wind blew in old Adam's case I had tried to be at one with him, but had failed. As a Scot, my sympathies were so far with the exiled house, but as a sane man, as a Protestant, as a patriot in the word's true sense, I stood by the Union and the house of Hanover. I felt that the Stuarts had been given chance after chance, and I knew they had proved themselves unworthy, ay, and that the last of them to hold a sceptre had not only been unworthy but worthless. What I had heard of this Chevalier was neither very good nor very bad, and such a man was not fit to be a king at such a time. 'Tis true I did not fancy a fat, beer-swilling German, as this George was said to be, but I reflected that the wisest heads in the kingdom had turned to him, and he was said to be a man of sense and courage as well as sensuous and corpulent. I had a hard struggle with myself, for I was very fond of old Adam and I knew my mother's leanings. There was the glamour of romance upon the weaker side, and well, there is a something in the Stuart line which attracts men, often to their doom, as witness the late rising under the Bonnie Prince, as they call him. But in that hour of doubt Henry Gering's arguments proved too strong for my mere sentiments, as did also my love for the college and interest in its welfare. I saw how things would drift backwards if James the Eighth sat upon the throne. I knew he was a bigoted if devout Papist, and that there would be, there could be, no rest in the land under his sway; and so I made up my mind once and for ever, nor have I regretted it, despite all that came to pass. You, good reader, may laugh at me and think I have

written at great length on my poor ideas and resolutions. You may even say, "Who cares what this fellow thought? it could not be of much moment!" I grant you it seems as if the doings of a humble student in the Row of the Candlemakers could not matter much, and yet in my case, as I hope to tell, it meant everything.

Had I shown that ring to Pittendreigh, and had he found its secret, as no doubt he would, a Stuart might have reigned to-day, though ten chances to one he had got himself deposed for some foolishness or other.

"From very little we may gather much," Silas Soiid had said, and verily he never spoke truer words.

But a truce to all these haverings. Years have rolled past since then, and if I say much more you will hold me guilty for all the blood shed in the late rebellion, and for Heaven only knows what else beside; so let me on with my tale, and let things unfold themselves, to show how I was folded in the meshes of conspiracy and treason, and well-nigh strangled by them. I put the ring away, and the idea of it out of my head for a time, and having carefully sorted the plaister on my wrist, which had now nearly healed, I turned to my work, and was glad of something quiet and peaceable to do, as was no wonder, when you come to think upon it.

Thereafter I posted a notice stating that the class would reassemble, and made arrangements with Doctor Crawford, and then set off for the apothecary's shop, for I had rather neglected that abode of drugs and odours. But though it was long past the dinner-hour the shop was shut, and so was every booth around. For the sake of the walk I had come by way of the West Bow, and I had noticed that the streets were more empty than usual, and that those folk I did pass were all in groups talking very gravely. And now the roll of a drum reached me, and farther down the street, about the Market Cross, and from it to the town guard house, was a crowd which blocked the highway from side to side. I soon found what was ado. The news had reached the capital, and they were enrolling volunteers. To hear the people speak, one might have thought the enemy were at the gates instead of in the far north, though, had we only known it, some of them were actually within the city walls,

and hatching a plot which has passed into history and will go down to posterity as long as the old castle sits proudly on its rock. I met Callender in the press, and found him so full of rumours that he might have stocked every vial in his shop with them and labelled each differently. Some said the Chevalier had landed and George had fled, some would have it that a French fleet was entering the Forth, others disbelieved everything they heard and manufactured their own news, and all the time the drums beat rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, and stout fellows offered themselves at the guard-house. I had half a mind to do the same, but I remembered that Pittendreigh was on the other side. I knew he would be in the thick of whatever was going on, and I had no wish to find myself opposed to him, and bound by oath to stick a yard of steel through him or take him prisoner. Instead, I thought I would go and find out how he was faring, and tell him part of the sequel to our doings of the night before. I found his room locked, however, and went back to the Row, where Mistress Soorock was waiting for me with another dose of her unruly member. I managed to pacify her, chiefly by threatening to leave of my own accord, though all the time she was vowing to turn me out neck and crop.

I could not settle to work, and looked in at the "White Horse," and watched the troops which had begun pouring into the city. They were to leave to join the army the Duke of Argyll was raising, and I fell in with the Campbells, who were very glum, as they had been ordered to remain in the guard for the present. For the first time since I had come to it the town wore a lively air, the causeways resounded to the drumming and to the call of trumpets, and horsemen clattered up and down the High Street with swinging sabres and pistol butts sticking from out their holsters. By good luck I met a Doctor Arthur, who was in attendance upon Doctor Elliot, and, from his face, I feared at first that my master was worse. He reassured me, but he had clearly something on his mind, for he answered me at random and kept fidgeting about like a gawkish girl who finds her fingers clumsy and her feet too large. He had good reason for worry, as I found ere long, but a healthy plot, and not an unhealthy patient, was the cause of his

trouble, as his wife discovered next day and his fellow-conspirators next night, to their cost. And it is this next night, the evening of the 8th September, with which I am concerned, the date fixed for the troops to march.

I had been in the anatomy room the most of the day, and I had it pretty well to myself, there being too much counter-attraction for the students; and indeed I only kept indoors to keep my mind busy, and because I thought it safer, as I was not sure how the kirkyard incident would end. But, though I knew it not, it had ended, as far as the authorities were concerned, with the rout of the rabble.

After supper, feeling restless, I strolled out to take the air, and I was busy thinking about the loss of the one ring and the finding of the other, and had walked along to the road which leads by the base of the castle rock to St. Cuthbert's kirk and the open country. It must have been about eleven of the clock when the sound of a musket shot from the castle above reached me, and then a great uproar, with the beating of drums and the bray of a bugle. It was very dark and I could see nothing, but I heard shouts and cries, and then lanterns flashed behind me, and I hid myself in a dark corner as a body of the guard went past me at the double. At the same time bells began to clash and boom in the city, and there were more musket shots. Suddenly a man's body came pitching down in front of me from the rocks, and I saw he was a Highlander near as big as Donald Dhu. He got upon his feet, and without offering to molest me he limped away with his hand pressed to his side, clearly badly hurt, while there came the sound of a scuffle from the direction in which the guard had gone. It was very plain that there had been some sort of an attack upon the fortress, and I deemed it wise to scuttle back to the Grassmarket lest I should be taken for one of the assailants. I had otherwise no fear for myself, as I had my good holly cudgel with me, a very sound weapon in a *mêlée*, and I resolved to see the sport. And sport I did see.

From the great open space I could note that the battlements were alive with lights, the whole place seemed on the *qui vive*, and the drummers kept beating the assembly. Already the folk had begun to gather, armed in every fashion

imaginable, some with modern weapons, others with old musketoons, spears, quarter-staves, and scythe blades. There was a babel of noise and every sign of a coming riot, when a horseman came thundering out of the West Bow and reined up near us, the sparks flying from the cobblestones as his beast, pulled well-nigh to its haunches, slid and struck upon them with clanging hoofs. We could not see who he was, but he cried out in a loud, stern voice—

“In the name of the King, I charge you disperse. Ye have proved yourselves loyal citizens (“A good liar this,” I thought), but all danger is past, and the castle safe. The guard will see to the peace of the town, so to your houses!”

The mob cheered him and melted away, and after he had seen that his words had proved effective he turned and rode off for the Cowgate; but more was to follow. Scarce had he gone when a man with a wooden leg came hobbling out of the shadow on the north side, going at a wonderful speed, and armed with a musket and bayonet. Fast on his heels, or rather his one heel, followed three or four of the guard, who cried out to stop him; but he made for the West Port, swinging his weapon by the barrel, and yelling to all to clear the way. He fairly stotted over the ground, but was brought to bay at last, for the city gate was shut and the warders tried to seize him. They had reckoned without their host, however, for he poked a hole in one and clubbed another, and then, with his back to the wall, stood and defied all comers. By the light of a brazier he showed as a stoutly built old man of very fierce aspect and bleeding in the face, and he danced about, shouting wildly and prodding at those who tried to close with him. His hat fell off, and his grey hair streamed this way and that, while as his breath grew short he quietened down and fought desperately, driving back three charges of the guard and leaving four wounded men on the ground. I felt half inclined to go to his assistance, so gallant a stand did he make; but luckily for me I refrained, as the guard, being reinforced, made a final rush, and the old game cock was borne backwards and pinned against the wall and then beaten down, though to the end he kept kicking and struggling and swearing most blasphemously. He was bound fast and led off in triumph, and then, as things seemed to have come to a conclusion,

and as they had taken to flashing lanterns in everyone's face, I made for home, where another sensation was in store for me.

"Here ye be at last," snapped Mistress Soorock, "and the Lord kens whaur ye hae been and whatna deviltry ye've been takin' a haund in, while ye ken best wha this auld wife may be that wants tae speer ye at this hoor o' the night. Gin she had been a lassie, or on this side o' fifty, deil a thoomb-snap wad she hae bided in ma hoose, but siccan an auld hag!" She held up her hands in horror or disgust, while I was fairly taken aback. "She says she has summat tae dae wi' yon dirty work o' yours at the college."

"Ah!" said I, which might have meant a great deal but meant nothing, for I had not the vaguest idea who this visitor might be, unless indeed she had to do with the late attack on the room of dissection. I climbed quickly up to my attic, and on entering found a candle alight upon the table, and cowering over the empty fireplace a small figure in a woman's black cloak and hood. She turned at my entry, and I saw she was an old crone, sallow and wrinkled, with a hanging under-lip. Her cheeks were half covered by the ribbons of a mutch which were fastened under her chin, and she was mumbling to herself as though demented.

"She must have been bonnie in her youth," was the first thought which crossed my mind, for her eyes were still bright as they kept shifting over me, and she had a clean-cut nose and a well-shaped chin. The second was, "What on earth could she want with me?" and so I asked her.

She merely grinned and leered, and plucked at her lip in an aimless fashion. Fancying she must be deaf I repeated my question in a louder tone, to be answered as before.

"Come, come, mother," I shouted, "what is it? If you will be dumb, at least make me some sign or other that I may know why you have come."

I asked for a sign, and, unlike some of whom I have read, I got one. Her left hand rose to her nose, her thumb was pressed against its point, and then out spread her fingers, while she began chuckling with glee. To say I was astonished was to say little. I stood and gazed at

her, and then I saw how I had been fooled. The hanging lip hung no longer, instead it pouted a little beyond the upper one, the wrinkles seemed to smooth out; with a quick motion hood and mutch were thrown back, and there sat Pittendreigh the Godless.

I clutched at the back of a chair, for the transformation was complete and bewildering.

"By my marrow bones," said the little man, "but you'll be the death of me, Allan. Your face has grown an inch longer. And so you could not tell me from an auld wife, and you an anatomist? Out upon you for a quack—a quirky, quibbling quack, sir! How like you that alliteration?"

"Is this a jest?" I asked.

"It is for me, but not for you, judging by your looks. But have you aught that is wet in the house? for climbing the castle rock is gey warm work even on a cold night."

I had some usquebaugh which Kenneth had given me, and I set it before him, and he set it inside him in a twinkling.

"Ha!" said he, "that is better. In short, Richard is himself again, as the Scripture hath it."

"Indeed?" said I, this being information to me.

"You are a rascal, sir," said he. "Have I not told you that I served for the Covenant, ay, and preached at a conventicle, and yet you would question my quotation?—another alliterative, I vow, yes, and still another. Most excellent! But sit ye down."

"Let me tell you, in the first place," said I, "that I am no Jacobite."

"The mair fulc you," he answered. "But I ken fine, Allan, that it would please you to see auld Adam swing, and so I give ye the chance. Not a word, sir, not a word. But look you, is this Mistress Soorock given to gracing the keyhole wi' her lug?"

"I do not know," I answered.

"Then go and see. When will ye learn caution?"

I did so, but found no one.

"Good," he went on, "but just lock the door, in case I escape, ye ken. I am worth money now, like yourself, Allan. We are a pair of villains, beyond a doubt," and he poked me in the ribs.

Thereupon he proceeded to tell me of the plot, how Lord Drummond had brought up fifty of his following from Perthshire, and how they had won over some of the garrison by heavy bribes.

"If it had not been that half the gentlemen were the driest-throated folk in the town, and that the ladders never eame, I would have supped in the castle this night," said he, "instead of tripping over this cursed petticoat. It maun be an awfu' thing to be a woman, Allan!"

He shook his head, and pulled such a long face and looked so queerly at his unaccustomed garb that I burst out laughing at him.

"But how got you the disguise?" I asked, "it would have cheated Auld Nick himself."

"Hoots," said he, "you don't find an old bird taken in a trap. I hid this half-way up in a safe place the night before, though, my certes, I near lost it in the dark. All the same there has been some treachery, for our plans were well laid; but they were on the watch."

He was right enough in this conjecture, for Doctor Arthur, like a fool or a wise man, had told his wife, and she had told my Lord Justice Clerk, and so Colonel Stuart knew of the plot; though so laggard was he, or so faithless to his trust, that if their plans had not miscarried, the conspirators, who numbered near one hundred men, would beyond a doubt have won the fortress and struck a great blow for the Stuart cause.

I told him of the wooden-legged man I had seen.

"Ay, ay," said he, "yon's auld M'Lean. He lost his leg at Killieerankie, but he's a dour deevil, and would fight on his stumps. You say he's ta'en? then he's like to lose more than a leg this time. But heigh ho! I maun be off; it wears late, or rather early."

"But," said I, "what brought you up here? You run great risk, for Mistress Soorock does not love you, and you knew not whether I was on your side or not."

"Hoots," said he, "I climbed up here for the same reason that I climbed up yonder," and he pointed in the direction of the castle rock.

"And what might that be?" I asked, for he seemed no whit disheartened at his failure.

"You have no idea?"

"Not I."

He shook his head.

"I fear," said he, "you are gey thick-headed after all, and bring me but little credit. Have you never seen the carving above my door?"

"Ah!" said I.

"Just so," said he, "*experientia docet*, Allan," and pulling the hood over his head, and hunching up his striped petticoat, he swept me a curtsey and took himself off, dragging his feet like a very aged woman, and wheezing as though his bronchi were worn out.

When he was half-way down my attic stair a thought struck me, and I followed him to the top, and cried out softly after him—

"But, mother, you did not finish the proverb."

"Eh?" said he, turning and looking up at me with the old wizened face which had greeted me on my arrival home.

"*Experientia docet stultos*," I whispered, leaning over the railings towards him; but I think I shall not set down what came up the stairs in reply, or the comments of Mistress Soorock thereupon.

CHAPTER XV

A CHAIN OF CHUCKLES

I WENT back to my room and went to bed, but there I lay and laughed and better laughed. The more I thought upon it the more amused I became. Here was an old fellow of eighty, who by rights should have been thinking of his latter end, linking himself, merely to enjoy a new sensation, with a band of desperate men, who were fighting, as they thought, for their country's good, and who had scaled a rock which had well-nigh defied all comers, with the exception of the Black Douglas and his trusty band in days of yore.

I laughed, but afterwards I grew more grave, for I could clearly see that my old friend was like to have a hard time of it if his doings were discovered. He had too many enemies to make a pastime out of a civil war, and I felt troubled on his account. Moreover, I was not sure but that he had been trying to throw dust in my eyes, and was a better Jacobite than he would have me believe. He must have seen that I took matters seriously and had strong convictions, which led me to adopt the side he hated or pretended to hate, and I knew enough of him to be aware that though he would stand by a friend to the last pinch if there was any need, yet his chief concern was the welfare of Adam Pittendreigh. Nor do I think he was at all peculiar in this way of thinking.

If I could only have lifted the dark veil which hid the future, I would have found reason to be much more troubled about myself.

For some days things went on very much as before the assault on the castle, and there seemed to be little effort made to capture the plotters, though the unfortunate sergeant who had betrayed his trust was strung up as a

warning, and the commander was dismissed his post. Old Adam, who was not without his fears, soon resumed his usual mode of life, and any forenoon might have been seen strutting down street to the "White Horse," saluting all and sundry, and often talking to himself, the while he twirled his cane and took note of any bonnie lass who chanced to pass him.

I also began to settle to work under Doctor Crawford, but saw no more of Silas Solid, who seemed at last to have returned south; and I had little doubt that if so my ring o' luck went with him, for I had come to the very natural conclusion that he had picked my pocket in the heat of the fight. I fancied I was well rid of him at the price, though I must confess that in some ways I missed his presence, for a puzzle is always interesting, and his conversation, as I have hinted, was at times novel and remarkable.

Many a time as I sat at work and heard the door creak dismally I looked up, half expecting to see his yellow face with the sneer which suited it so well, and the square-shouldered frame, thin legs, and huge feet, in the dress which suited them so well; to hear his harsh, cold voice, and to watch his stealthy approach and catch the glitter in his pale, faded-looking eyes. But the place which had known him once knew him no more for ever, as far as I can tell.

As for the other ring, I tried to forget about it, but could not, even after its whilom owner had vanished from the room to his second grave. For at that period ten days was our limit time, save for preparations, and I could not trust Boddie with the secret; while he was a great stickler for rules and observances, and would straightway have told Doctor Elliot had the subject remained upon the table a day longer than was permitted.

My master got worse instead of better, and his head became affected at last, so that I saw there was no use troubling him with the story of the ring for the present at anyrate, and I dared not tell anyone else. Therefore I hid it away in a safe place in my room, after again examining it with care and finding nothing.

But if I had thought I was quit of danger and

excitement I was sorely mistaken, for I soon became convinced that someone was on my track who apparently sought the ring, or my life, or both.

One day on returning home I found my room in disorder, my few belongings tossed about, my spare suit cut and slashed in the lining, and the heels of my spare shoes rent off and split. In a very angry mood I summoned Mistress Soorock and demanded an explanation, but she had none to give. She had been to the market, "and weel, gin I didna keep my door lockit, she was no' tae blame." I soon saw she knew nothing of the matter, and yet who could have heard of the fate of the ring and dared to seek for it in this manner? I was no weakling, and whoever had done this deed must have known that he ran the risk of a very sound belabouring or a broken crown if I caught him in the act. Could it have been Silas Solid? As far as I could tell he alone knew of this secret, and certainly he had desired the ring; but then again he had vanished, and Edinburgh was not a great city where a man could hide himself with ease. To be sure he might have men in his pay, but I could not understand such eagerness for a mere curio, and a man was not likely to put his life in jeopardy for a specimen. Thus I reasoned, and did not think I was putting *my* life in danger for a ring I knew nothing about beyond its latest history. But this very attempt to steal it put my back up, as the saying is, and made me resolve to retain it at all hazards: for if ever there was an obstinate, fool-hardy mortal in his youth, that mortal was Allan Oliphant. I reflected that I had undergone all the trouble and toil which had ended in its discovery, and I vowed I would not be robbed of it now; though I fear my logic was greatly at fault, for how I was to derive benefit by undergoing more trouble is a question I have never answered, nor indeed did I ever put it to myself.

Suffice to say I kept the ring concealed, and within a week learned that I was being dogged whenever I walked by deserted streets or ventured forth at night. This only served to prevent me doing those things, and caused me to carry a loaded pistol and my good cudgel on all occasions, despite an order commanding the townfolk to go unarmed. My room I kept locked and the window fastened closely,

while I charged Mistress Soorock to give me notice of any loiterers ; and it is to her credit that, knowing I was running some risk or other, she held her tongue, and let me stay on in my lodgings. But, as I have said, she was on the whole a very worthy woman, whose bite was nothing to her bark. It was no wonder that in a month's time, what with uncertainty, lurking dangers, and hairbreadth escapes, I scarce deemed life worth living, and had become so lean and anxious-faced that Pittendreigh rallied me on my appearance, and would have it that I had become a hard liver. Had he known that twice I had been within an ace of being stabbed by a man all muffled in a cloak ; that once a great stone had crashed on the roadway at my feet, blown apparently from a chimney stack by a high wind ; that I had waked one night in terror, and seen a man's face pressed close to my window, a man's face all in the shadow and upside down, which had vanished as I sprang from my bed, and had remained an unsolved mystery—had he known all this, I say, he might have spared me his railings ; but I would not tell him, having made up my mind, which was of such a nature that once made up it was as the laws of the Medes and Persians, which could not be altered.

No doubt I acted like a wilful child. Indeed I have often seen some wee laddie grip a belonging of no value with all his might, and scream and cry all because it was to be taken from him as being hurtful or needed elsewhere. Thus it was with me ; but on my honour I could scarce help doing as I did, for what's bred in the bone cannot be rooted out in half a lifetime, and my father had been just such another in his youth. There is no need for me to dwell on all the dangers I passed through at that time, for it would mean merely a list of narrow escapes, the incidents themselves cropping up and passing in a few seconds of time, and do what I might I could not discover my enemy, or lodge a bullet in him, or get to grips with him ; only I became convinced that there was a band of three against me—one a smallish man, and two great hulking fellows, very active, however, and very stealthy.

Perchance you will wonder why I did not again put the Campbell's oath of fealty to the test, but the reason is simple. They had been summoned to join the army of

Argyll, which was gathered about Stirling and getting ready to oppose the Earl of Mar, who was making progress in the north. Indeed things looked rosy for the Jacobites. The Highlands, as far south as Perth, were in their hands. They had taken Forfar and Fifeshire, and were making headway in the north of England. James had been proclaimed in town after town, and it was reported that men were flocking to the rebel standard. Perth itself had fallen into their power, and now the capital was threatened. We had heard the thunder of the great guns as the ships of war cannonaded the fort at Burntisland, and never shall I forget the frenzied excitement which pervaded all classes and both parties when the news came in that Brigadier MacIntosh—old Borlum, as he was called—had crossed the Forth and was advancing upon the city from the east. I heard of it first as I was in Callender's shop, and soon the drums began to roll and rattle out their summons, while folk rushed into the High Street, and women shrieked, and children cried shrilly, and burghers and booth-keepers looked at each other with troubled faces, while pocket thieves plied a brisk trade. I turned out with the rest, and was in time to see a fine sight. A man mounted on a superb black charger came galloping up the street, shaking his bridle and shouting to the crowd. They gave way before him, as paper parts at the snip of the scissors, and, leaning well forward in his saddle, his steel cuirass glistening in the morning's sun, he swept past me and headed for the Bow, *en route* for the West Port and the army of Argyll at Stirling. I half looked to see him shot as he rode, for there was many a Jacobite in the throng, and they did not hesitate to show their pleasure; while old Adam treated everyone to wine who chose to ask for it, and deported himself as though he had been the Pretender, the Earl of Mar, and the Brigadier all rolled into one.

"What ho, Allan!" said he, all bustle and importance, "I shall proclaim you as a rebel unless you recant. Now for James or George, which, sir?"

"I am for George, as you know," I answered quietly.

"Ye dour deevil," he cried, "ye would hang in spite o' me: but dinna say I didna dae ma best tae save ye," and he darted away to buttonhole some crony of like tendencies

with himself, and I think he really thought he had made me a kindly offer in giving me a last chance.

It was well for the city that at such a time Provost Campbell was at its head. He it was who had sent the courier spurring westwards, and he it was who restored order and called out the guard, the volunteers, and the trained bands. All this did much to allay the panic, and I forgot my own fears in the midst of all the bustle.

Thus for the first time for many nights I ventured out, and about ten of the clock saw the great Duke with five hundred horse come clattering in at the West Port, and joined in the roar which welcomed him. Near half his men were foot soldiers, mounted on great clumsy brutes taken from the country folk, loose loined and shaggy fetlocked; but I should not have cared to face a charge from them, and they were like to prove useful against the Highlanders, as these sons of the hills had grave doubts as to the origin of cavalry, looking upon them with fear and superstition, and dreading them in consequence. I was watching this gallant array file through the gate when I caught sight of Pittendreigh, who was in his old clothes and without his wig, and who was keeping one eye on the horsemen and another on the gate. He was fidgeting about, from which I knew something was afoot, and so I got close to him, for I feared he might do something rash, and in a way I felt sorry for the old man, whose high hopes had thus come to nothing; for I had found out that his chief ambition at this the tag-end of his life was to have three letters tagged on to the front of his name, and to be able to sign himself before his death, Adam Pittendreigh, Knight.

He had a colour in his face and he was muttering to himself, very clearly annoyed, while the rude jests of the tired but jovial dragoons must have vexed him sorely. I did not know then that he had worked day and night to keep the Brigadier's little force informed as to what was passing. I did not know that his advices had helped to determine the sudden march on the capital, and that he was one of the leading spirits of the Rebellion; albeit I might have guessed it, for old Adam was not the man to do things by halves, and no grass could grow under his heels. It must have been very bitter to him to see the

Duke bring in the relief and to hear the jubilations of the crowd; but he had work to do, and before the last trooper had entered the town he jostled a man in among the horses so that he fell, and at once there was confusion. In the middle of all this to-do I saw the old rogue slip unnoticed through the gateway, and I straightway followed him, for I was curious to see what he would be about, and at the same time I felt I might aid him if he fell into danger. What a fool I was in those days! I might have known that a man who had been able to guard his head for eighty years, whose eyes were good, his teeth sound, and his limbs supple, would have no need of my help, even though he lacked a few fingers of his right hand. I can see now it was as though a big, clumsy, blundering dog had laid himself out to take care of a wild cat, but in those days I had a great belief in myself, and half imagined that the world had been made for my benefit. But such youths I know to-day, and no doubt they will cumber this earth as long as there are boys to grow into them, and until they get a little sense knocked into their silly heads.

And so it befell that instead of my helping Pittendreigh that worthy helped me when I was in dire straits, for I had not noticed the man, cloaked and booted, who had slipped out after us, a man who had no need to fear the gatekeeper, for he had that in his hand which gave him the power that issues from a throne.

The moment old Adam got free of the few mean dwellings which in those days clustered outside the city wall he turned sharply to his right and made off across country, skirting the western end of the Nor' Loch, and passing between it and St. Cuthbert's kirk.

The night was not very dark, and I followed him easily, wondering what his mission might be, and at times looking to each side of me but never behind. Pittendreigh was by no means such a fool, for he would wheel round every now and then, and this kept me on the alert, as I had to sink quietly to earth or hide behind some bank or tree. On we went, and we turned again to the right and kept along the Lang Dykes. Away across the water and swampy waste rose the huge, dark mass of the castle rock, crowned by wall and battlement and turret. Specks of yellow lights

from links and lanthorns were flitting here and there, for the garrison was under arms to receive the Duke, and a bugle call sounded twice and died away, its notes lingering long on the night air. A few wild fowl stirred at the sedgy margins of the loch, and one got up on whirring wing, and with outstretched neck sputtered off across the surface, leaving a little track of silver sparkles behind it, for there was a moon track on the water.

All else was quiet as the grave, only now and then something burred by the roadside, bringing to my mind old Adam's voice, and I chuckled to think how I would surprise him in the morning. Little did I imagine that a dark figure twenty paces in my rear was chuckling to think how he would surprise me long before morning broke, and little did either of us think that Pittendreigh the Godless was chuckling at the two wisecrackers who followed in the steps of one who had seen more bickers than they had years, who had killed more men than they had fingers, who knew more of this sort of game than both of them put together, clever and subtle as one of them was, and that one not the bigger of the twain.

Such was the chain of chuckles, as one might call it, and every link of it had no reason for existence; for even old Adam had reckoned without his host when he had thought to despise the last of the men who on that October night stole eastwards in a line with the city.

And what a strange city it looked! In very truth one set on a hill which could not be hid. A mass of steep, tall houses, crow-footed gables, long chimney stacks, pointed roofs and weather-vaned spires, above all of which, outlined against the cloudy, star-set sky, which showed silver edging to every vapour mass, rested the great crown of St. Giles' old kirk, looking like giant tracery in the distance. The heavy Tron bell clanged the half-hour as we slipped along over the waste, furze grown ground, which perchance some day the city will invade, and where, it may be, traffic will rumble and people jostle one another.

Cries and shouts were borne to us from the street across the valley, for the populace were making merry at the sudden ending to their fears. Half filling up the gap at the end of the slope loomed the black crags, shadowy and indistinct,

with the rounded top of the lion's head peeping from above them, as though to show that they formed a mighty barrier against the north winds for the bulk of the beast-shaped hill.

Old Adam kept going at a great rate, for he knew every inch of the ground, and I could follow him easily, for we had often walked homewards by this round-about way to the Watergate after fishing by Randolph's Cliff in the Water o' Leith. We were soon skirting the base of the Caltoun Craigs, a very lonely spot, at the back of which they were wont to hold the joustings and tournaments in the old days, and where now they hang malefactors and burn witches. There for the first time I saw that Pittendreich had a sword with him, for he held it in readiness as he hurried on towards the Abbeyhill. Keeping to the northwards of the palace, which was wrapped in darkness, we descended to more level ground, and by a winding path amongst hedgerows, and copses, and over fields we struck the King's Park near its eastern boundary.

Twice suspicious-looking fellows flitted past us, and once I heard voices whispering close to me, but the sight of one man behind another no doubt made them think that they would spoil sport did they attack the first, or perhaps they feared the sword, or guessed whither we were going, and sympathised, and so left us in peace. And now I saw old Adam's plan. He had come to warn the Brigadier, who was encamped, according to report, near a little hamlet called Jock's Lodge, so named, it was said, from the hut of a half-witted man who once abode there. It had been a wily trick to slip out of the West Port during the hubbub, for all the eastern walls and gates would be closely guarded, and to a man of old Adam's activity there was but a trifling loss of time in thus half circling the town. He had become much more careful now, glancing about him more frequently, and at times lying down and placing his ear to the ground. He began to cast about in divers directions, and stopped at times as though at fault, and then held steadily on for another ten minutes, keeping to the north again. At last he paused once more, and I saw him put his hands to his mouth and heard him give a cry as of an owl hooting, a quavering, mournful "whoot-oo,

whoot-oo," which carried far on the still night air. It was quickly answered from a long distance off, and again he started away, calling at intervals and being answered, till his guiding cry sounded so close that I deemed it prudent to hide myself and let him go on alone, for it was plain he was out of danger for the present, and had found his friends. I crept in underneath a bush, and faintly heard the sentry challenge him. No doubt he gave the counter-sign, for all became quiet, and save for a single ruddy glow which marked a camp fire there was no sign of the Highland host, as someone had called them, though there were but some sixteen hundred men, half of whom hailed from Fife and Angus.

In a little while, however, a horn brayed, there was a skirl upon the pipes, a confused medley of sounds reached me, and I fancied I could catch rough voices swearing at horses, and then came the measured tramp of feet upon the march. But as I lay and listened something else caught my ear, and that was a faint rustle on the other side of the thick bush under which I lay in ambush. Now, though I know not the reason, I maintain that there is something eerie and suspicious in such a sound. It may be that the serpent rustled as he wriggled towards Mother Eve, and that her offspring have dreaded the sound ever since; it may be that it often seems to be due to no visible cause, or that its very softness and lightness go against it. I cannot tell, but certain it is that many besides myself find it unpleasant, and start when they hear it. Just then, however, I thought nothing of it for the moment, being intent upon listening to the sound of the hurriedly roused army, if army it could be called. But suddenly this rustle was followed by another noise, a noise such as a man makes when his uvula is long and trailing, or when his throat is tickled by a hair or a tiny fish bone. In an instant I was all alert, and, gripping my cudgel and loosening the pistol which I carried in my belt, I began to worm softly along the ground, working round the bush, so that, if possible, I might find out the source of this little cough. I fancied it must have come from a sheep which had wakened or had not slept, and yet could not be sure; and a thrill ran through me, for it is strange what will excite a man at night when he is on

any sort of venture, that is, a man with no experience of such matters.

The noise of the departing force still continued, but they were clearly going off in an opposite direction. The rattle had ceased, and so I crawled along and rounded the ragged end of the bush, but there was nothing on the other side.

The moon was fairly bright by this time, and I could see half-withered leaves and stems and grass distinctly, but there was not a sign of any living thing. The ground was level for several yards around, and showed white and bare and ghostly in the pale, sickly light. There was nothing upon it that could cough.

I was puzzled, and an uneasy feeling took possession of me. The thought darted across my mind that perchance someone was following me round the bush and might take me in the rear. I raised my head and, with a quick motion which had something of a shudder in it, looked behind me.

There is a kind of fear which is akin to stupor, a terror which paralyses by reason of horror, a scare which takes away the reason and leaves only a power of realising the cause of what is seen or heard. It is so sudden, so dreadful, that the muscles grow rigid or flaccid and are useless, the eyeballs start from their sockets, the skin creeps and becomes cold, and the hair bristles of its own accord; the mouth grows dry, the breath ceases, and the blood passes from the surface.

Once before, by an open grave, I had experienced such symptoms, and now again they laid hold upon me, intensified fourfold, for there, not a foot away, above me, and grinning at me so that the teeth showed, with black and curly hair, with tufted beard and ear circlets, was the bloodless face of the man whose dead body I had raised from Greyfriars kirkyard, who had stumbled and been dragged between me and Adam Pittendreigh down the Row of the Candlemakers, and whom I had dissected with my own hands as he lay upon the table in our room at the college.

CHAPTER XVI

I MEET TWO ENEMIES IN ONE DAY

I CAME to myself when a fortnight had passed, and found I had very nearly followed Doctor Elliot into the far land whose portals are close shut to all who would return from it, but ever open to the wearied seeker. For my good master was dead. The first Professor of the Anatomy had gone to his account at a time when a cloud hung over the college. He had passed away without seeing any of the fame and glory which he believed would follow, and which to some extent has followed, his labours and those of the men who came after him.

I did not hear this sad news, however, for some time after my wits had returned. Indeed I was such a sorry wreck, so thin and pale, so weak and lifeless, that it scarce seemed as if I could struggle back to life and vigour. All this had not been the result of my fright alone, for when I had been carried home by some strangers, my head showed a lump as large as a hen's egg, and my scalp was cut and bruised. I had a very confused idea as to what had happened to me, but as I gathered way, as mariners put it, I remembered that night in the open, the rustle, the cough, and the face of the dead man, the dead face with the seeing eyes, which had looked into mine. I asked what it all meant, but neither Callender nor Mistress Soorock would tell me anything, having been forbidden by Doctor Crawford, who had tended me as I lay senseless, and had bled me, and cupped the nape of my neck after the dry method, and kept cold cloths to my head and blisters to my soles, and so roused me in the long-run, though it had been touch and go. All I could learn at that time was that my mother had been summoned to my bedside, but was unable to travel, having been taken with a cold upon the chest, and

the weather having been raw and chilly. I knew very well that this would scarcely have sufficed to keep her away from me, and I guessed that my father had put his foot down, being determined to let his erring son, for so he deemed me, fight his own battle of life, even though it should come to be a battle between life and death.

I was grieved that my mother had been kept from me, and then I thought that Mistress Dorothy, who could wheedle anything out of John Oliphant, might have used her influence or paid me a visit, and I began to long for her sympathy and a sight of her, while I dreamed of her at nights.

From this I am certain that love-sickness is indeed an ailment, for it catches us when we are weakest and have least strength to resist, and is thus a disease as much as the black death or the gaol fever. But I must on, for I have just been pinched very sorely in the ear with a promise of worse to follow if I continue in this strain.

I was surprised that old Adam did not look in upon me, but I soon learned that he had come to grief also.

All that Callender knew about him was contained in a letter which he showed me, and which a caddie had brought him from an inn at Dalkeith. It ran as follows:—

“DEAR JAMIE,—By a misfortunate chance I have been taken, and even now I am on the road to London town. I pray you grieve not on this account, neither attempt a rescue, for I have long desired to see this great Babylon, yet have never had opportunity of ogling it (*nota bene*). I doubt not there are some elegant and excellent experiences (*N.B.*) to be gained in siccan a place even by an auld man. By the good grace of the leader of the troop, who is a very decent youth, albeit an Englishman, I am permitted to send these to thee (*N.B.*) I have seen to it that yon puir lad, Allan Oliphant, is safe. God only kens why he came after me. He is thick skulled and will recover, so tell him—boot and saddle—will write with (*N.B.*) more care anon. —Yr faithfull friend,
A. P.”

I had hoped to find some explanation of the strange and horrible thing which had happened to me, and threw it down much disappointed, though I could not help smiling at the alliterations he had crammed in, hurried though he

must have been. I only wished he had left them out, and told us something of the doings of that fatal night when I had seen him last, creeping to the camp of the Brigadier. He seemed in good spirits, but I sorrowed at his loss, and feared for him, and chafed at the illness which had stretched me on my back, as otherwise, despite his injunctions, I had made an effort to bring him back. As it was, he had vanished completely, and Callender had not been able to discover how or where he had been taken; for those who found me belonged to the trained bands with Argyll, and had been directed to me by some bairn on a road near, and to my lodging by a writing I always carried in my coat. Nothing had been stolen from my pockets, and I had no injury beyond that to my head. I found I had babbled of the dead face I had seen as I lay unconscious, but they had thought my words the ravings of a disordered brain; and as I knew they would not believe my story, I held my tongue and puzzled hopelessly over the matter. Had it not been for my wound I might have thought the whole thing a vision, the product of a heated imagination; but as it was, I could make nothing of it, for I had no recollection of seeing any body tacked on to the gruesome head, and had seen no movement and felt no blow. Meanwhile I learned the city had been saved, and that without bloodshed. The Brigadier had got him into the citadel at Leith, the last vestige of old Noll's visit north, and there had defied the Duke, who had marched out to meet him and had marched back again without a blow struck or a shot fired. I further heard that MacIntosh had thereafter retreated to Seaton House, some ten miles away, and that at last, neither side being over keen for combat, he had gone south to join the English Jacobites who were advancing from the Cheviots. Otherwise little had happened, though the Duke had hurried away to meet the Earl, who was said to be descending on Stirling; but there had been no word of a battle, and everything was quiet for the nonce.

My thoughts were far from peaceful, however. I sunk into a state of settled melancholy, and would sit idly looking out from my window for hours together, and seeing nothing. My two best friends in all the town had gone, the one to prison, the other to his grave. There may have been some-

thing selfish in my grief,—I almost think there was,—but at anyrate it was sincere. I had small hopes of seeing Adam again, for, despite his fire and energy, he was a very old man, and perchance what years and dangers had been unable to accomplish might be only too surely brought about by the dungeon, the rope, or the block. I knew now how I had relished his company, and had some vague satisfaction in thinking over his queer tales, his tricks of speech, and oddities of manner.

He had evidently been concerned for my safety even when in danger himself, and the thought touched me. He might be flighty, a trifle crack-brained on some points, and quick-tempered, but he was warm-hearted, full of courage, and true as tempered steel; and in the dull rut of life it is refreshing and heartening to meet one out of common, if his peculiarities be harmless and not ill-timed.

I could not have the same feelings towards Doctor Elliot's memory, but I have ever remembered him as a worthy, kindly man, with a touch of humour about him, very shrewd, and very learned in his own work; and to him in large measure I owe what skill and knowledge I now have, for he taught me proper methods, and urged upon me the duty of diligence; and without these two guiding lights no man can steer his barque wisely and well through the troubled waters of human life. I had reason to be grateful to my worthy landlady and to the apothecary, for they took good care of me, and proved themselves friends indeed. One never knows how kind folks are till he falls ill or is stricken down in some way, and the poorer the people the greater the kindness shown.

I did not lack for strong and tempting soups, delicate dishes, bitter tonics, and good cordials, and what pride and stubbornness there was in me melted away as I lay feeble and sad, with throbbing head and husky voice. Mistress Soorock had a woman's heart and a woman's touch, despite her sharp red nose, shrill accents, and chapped knuckles, and I am not likely to forget her cheery gossip and rude but hearty comfortings. As for Callender, though he mourned the loss of Pittendreigh, and had not heard from him again, he proved himself a staunch ally; and many a time when he should have been in his shop

he sat by me and smoked and talked in his quiet, dry way, and passed curious remarks on his fellow-men and their ways. A qucer, many-sided old bachelor he was, whose life had been as placid as the waters of a Dutch canal, though he had lived in a stormy time and had seen a few things worth seeing in his day. He was a kind of cool-headed philosopher, not over-cautious as to what he said, but canny after a way of his own, and his chief concern in life was to gather, digest, and retail news, and blacken three pipes in a year.

"Ye're a daft laddie," he would say to me; "gin ye carry on at this rate ye'll wear dune, unless ye be a second Adam; and forbye, a' this collieshangie is no' worth fashin' yersel' about. I dinna care a buckie wha reigns, as lang as it's no' me, and I can hae ma sax fills o' Virginia in the day. The Lord preserve 's, but some folk are keen on makin' awa' wi' theirsels. Suicide I ca' it, ay, suicide," and he would spit and start sucking again at his tooth-bitten pipe stem.

He would now and then bring odd copies of the *Courant* and *Intelligencer*, but he was a better informant than either of these sheets, which, as he confessed, was to be attributed to the fact that the folk who came most to him for drugs were idle bodies who had nothing to do, and therefore plenty to say, and took more interest in their neighbours' affairs and their own lights and livers than they had any right to do.

"Haud yer tongue," he would say, "I canna abide them. Some maun be stocked as weel as ma ain shelves, and if it wasna that I filled them up frae the cask, would ha' dee'd lang syne."

The cask held bottle washings, diluted one half and coloured very finely with burnt sugar; but it was safe stuff, while the price was small. And though Jamie affected to despise his customers, he would have been mightily put out had he mis'ed his daily cracks with them, which indeed he took as part payment. He was as easy-going as Pittendricgh's pills were the reverse, and had a firm mind on one point only—for he would never wear an apron when at work, and become, as he said, "like a haverin' female wumman." Poor old Jamie! he was more like a woman than he thought, and I know some fine ladies who would

be the better of some of his gentleness and kindness, but have only his love of gossip and length of tongue.

When once I had safely rounded the corner, however, I was not long in getting on my legs again, though I had better have stayed in bed, as I might have done had I known what awaited me; and yet I doubt if this is altogether true for a certain reason, which, to venture into metre, will be apparent in due season.

I was soon able to be out of doors, but I did not go near the college, as my head was scarce fit for work, and a room of dissection is not the best place for an invalid. Besides, everything was in disorder owing to the war, and folk thought more of carving and cutting living bodies than dead ones.

It was on the second day after I had ceased to be a close prisoner in my room that I became aware of the presence in the town of the man I had been longing to meet ever since the murder in the High Street, the villain with the vague countenance and the chin-patch, who had fooled and robbed me at the "Magpie," who was responsible for the scar upon my wrist, and had fired the fatal shot at the stranger who carried the ring which was now in my possession.

I was walking along the Cowgate enjoying the fresh nip of the frosty weather, and noting the black ice which had formed on every puddle, when some fifty yards in front of me a man stepped out into the street, having apparently come from a house door or an entry.

One glance was sufficient. It was the assassin.

He looked carelessly on either side, and no doubt saw my figure, for at sight of him I had come to a standstill, trembling all over with excitement, and feeling for the pistol I carried in my belt,—a new one, by the way, for my good holly staff and other barker had been taken from me on the night when I had been struck senseless near the camp of the Brigadier.

I say that in all likelihood he noted me, but he could not have recognised me, for he walked slowly away, and even stopped once or twice to thrust his cane at something, probably through the crusting on the pools. There could be no doubt as to his identity. I had seen his profile clearly and his full face well, and there was a dark spot on

his chin, while he wore the same long black cloak as when first I had the misfortune to clap eyes on him.

To be sure he was too far off to make out his features, but even had he been near me that would have helped me little, for, as I have said, beyond the blackness of his eyebrows and his hair, the man's face was nothing to me but a dim memory of pallor, a blurred picture of whitish, waxy skin, and eyes which looked as though the colour had been half washed out of them.

To be sure I had not seen him by daylight, when perchance he might be more presentable, and I knew him now more by his dress and carriage than anything else. Indeed, had he been dressed otherwise he might have passed by me and left me none the wiser, unless indeed the chin-patch had caused me to look closely at him.

What was I to do? Should I arrest him?

I was far from strong, and though I was a bigger man I would need to have recourse to my weapon if I wished to overpower him, for no one was about who could help me. Again, I had no proof to offer that he had been guilty of the crime. If I denounced him, ten chances to one he would turn on me, and I might find myself undone.

And then the proper thing to do occurred to me. Callender had told me that the Campbells, in a very bad temper, had been sent back to their guard duty, as, after the scare from the Brigadier, the Duke and the Provost deemed it wise to strengthen the city's defences, and the three great lads were of more value than others would have been, both from their size and strength and from their knowledge of the town.

I had not yet seen them, for there was much drilling and watchfulness on the part of all the forces, but it struck me that if I tracked this rogue to his accustomed haunts,—I had already found one place with which he seemed familiar,—my three henchmen would be sure to find some way to join me in an undertaking so much to their liking as capturing the villain, and wringing his neck and a confession out of him at one and the same time. To this intent I kept my eye on him and followed stealthily, when suddenly he turned the corner of one of the many narrow wynds which lead from the Cowgate upwards to the High Street, and so

vanished from my sight. I was after him hot foot, for it would not do to let him too far ahead, and he might be bound for one of the tall houses lining the alley, and thus I might lose him.

Had he shown any sign of having recognised me I would have been very careful at the corner, but I was certain, from his careless mien and easy tread, that he suspected nothing, and so I rounded it at the run, and stumbled heavily against a man who had been walking downhill towards me.

"Pardon!" I cried, and was for rushing onwards, when two things brought me to a halt.

The one was that there was no sign of my quarry, the second, that the man whom I had cannoned against, and who had seized me by the skirt of my coat, was no other than he whom I had set down as a thief and a robber, he whom I believed to be in England, in short, Doctor Silas Solid.

There could be no mistaking him, even though he was about the last person on earth I expected to meet, and though he was clad in better taste than was his usual habit, and had a decent hat upon his head. I stood and gaped at him, and he looked up at me with what almost seemed like a twinkle in his little pig-like eyes.

"Whither away so fast?" he asked, and the chill harshness of his grating voice was colder than the cold November air.

"I must off," I panted, for my breath was not what it had been, and even a short burst served to exhaust me and bring on a pain in my side. But even as I spoke I saw that there was no one to chase; the wynd was empty save for an old woman sitting on a doorstep near its head.

"Quick!" I cried, "which house has he entered?"

"He? whom do you mean?"

"The man who turned up here from the Cowgate."

"Ah, a fellow in a cloak?"

"Yes, yes; where is he?"

"He should be in the High Street by this time."

"In the High Street? Impossible!" I cried.

"So? I know a fast runner when I see him."

"He ran, then?"

"Like the wind, and was in such a mad haste he well-nigh knocked me down, as you threatened to do."

"Damn!" I cried.

"Hush," said Doctor Solid, "such language is scarce fitting in one but new recovered from an illness."

I wondered how he knew this, but no doubt my appearance was sufficient to warrant his diagnosis, while someone might have told him; but this was a mere passing thought, for I was much chagrined at having lost sight of my enemy, who, after all, must have known me, and assumed his nonchalant air to put me off the scent.

"He must have been a wily dog," I said ruefully.

"He was certainly a rude one," said Doctor Solid, "for he had not the grace to crave my forgiveness after taking such liberty with my epigastrium. But what have you against him, my young sir? You seem to thirst for the fellow's blood, and, by my soul, I could almost wish you luck."

"That is my affair," I answered shortly, for I was much put out.

"So?" said he, "well and I fancy my stomach pit is my affair; but let that pass. I was grieved to hear the news of the decease of my good friend Doctor Elliot. Was there an autopsy?"

"A what?" I asked, and then, seeing what he meant before he could reply, I merely shook my head and looked at him in some disgust, for the idea was repellent to me.

"And," he said, with a sneer, "you hope to become a great school of medicine, I understand? Yet one of your teachers, who dies of a strange complaint, has not the spirit to make his body the means of advancing science."

"No one ever held such ideas," I said.

"Pardon me, but on the Continent it is far from uncommon, and I have left my own frame to be disposed of in such a manner if I die from natural causes; indeed," he went on, raising his voice and spreading out his hands, for he carried no cane, "what have I not done?"

He spoke almost fiercely, and a strange glow came into his colourless face, while his harsh voice trembled.

"What have I not done to advance the cause? Have I not toiled and laboured, have I not fought and sweated, ay, and starved? I tell you I have sacrificed all, I have spent and been spent. Do you know," he continued, bringing his clenched fist down upon his open palm, "do you know

that I have a germ of truth within my brain which when developed will change all things? I shall make men laugh at disease and scorn suffering; I shall be the master of the blood, and the blood is the life. I tell you when I have done, and solved the problem, they shall say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

He was much excited, and slipped on the stones and would have fallen had I not caught him by the arm. This brought his flood of eloquence to an abrupt ending, and made his rhapsody sound so ridiculous that I smiled. Besides, the man was raving. He had always been strange; he must now be mad.

He saw me smile, and in a moment was himself again.

"Ah, you may mock," he sneered, "but some day you will marvel,—that is, if you have the sense to understand; which I doubt, sir, I very much doubt, for you are a fool."

"That may be so," said I, "but I am not fool enough to forget you have a ring of mine which you stole from out my pocket," and I gripped him by the coat collar.

"So," he answered coolly, "and are you fool enough to forget another ring? Have you delivered it to the authorities? I see from your face you have not. Then," said he, freeing himself with a sharp wrench, "are you willing to exchange?"

"No," said I, barring his passage, "I am not."

"Then I fear I must expose you, my young sir."

"Expose me?"

"Even so, and a pretty account you shall give to their worships. But suffer me to pass."

"Stay," said I; "you have proved yourself a liar, for you promised secrecy, but will you give me time to think upon the matter?"

"How long may you require?"

"Two days," I answered at random, for I only sought to gain a respite.

"Two days be it, then. You shall hear from me ere that," and lifting his hat he passed on, and turning the corner was out of sight.

To say this interview astonished me is to say little. I was not only astonished, I was astounded. In pursuit of one enemy, I had come upon another, and found he had

to all appearance gone mad, but had enough sense left to make matters mightily unpleasant for me if he chose, yes, and if I chose, for he had left the remedy in my hands.

Was I to do as he wished?

Nothing but misfortune had followed me since I had lost the ring o' luck. I had well-nigh lost my life, I had lost my two best friends, I had lost my enemy in another fashion, and if I was to be again dogged as I had been before, I would soon lose what little nerve I had left me. 'Tis true I had the melancholy satisfaction of having the great signet stowed away in a safe place, but the game was scarce worth the candle. Moreover, I argued, I should hand it over of my own free will. I was abating nothing of my determination. My reason fought with my obstinacy.

I walked on, thinking over my future course of action, but could come to no conclusion.

"Why had Silas Solid not taken this step before?" I asked myself. "He had been away, perchance, and yet, had he? The smallest of the three men who had dogged me might very well have been this yellow-faced liar.

"Had he some special interest in this ring? Could he know its secret? It looked strangely like it. Then it might be that he was in reality no more anxious than I was that the magistrates should hear of this property of the murdered man. He might be trying to bluff me, trying to force me into yielding it up by a vague threat which he could not fulfil. At that rate I would be better to deliver it up myself, and then demand the Cameron's ring from him."

To tell the truth, I did not know what to do. There were so many possibilities, it was like taking a leap in the dark to do one thing or the other. I cursed the day I had listened to his evil counsels and raised the body. And here again a new idea came into my head. "Could Silas Solid have known what the stomach contained? Was this all a cunning plot in which he had made me his unconscious tool?" My cheek burned at the thought, for if so I had, in very truth, been the fool he called me. And yet when I came to think matters over, it seemed more and more probable that I had fallen into his trap, for I had come to one conclusion, in which I felt fairly certain I was right.

Doctor Silas Solid was a Jacobite.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MESSAGE WHICH CAME BY NIGHT

IT is a curious thing how one is apt to jump to a conclusion. Looking back after all these years, I wonder upon what grounds I made out that this Englishman was a rebel. I based my arguments chiefly on the doubtful though likely idea that he had known the secret of the corpse and knew the meaning of the signet. Then again, his words when I had explained the placard to him, which, from their tenor, would have pointed to him as a Royalist, had no doubt been used for the purpose of deceiving me. He had insisted too much, and had thus, so to speak, shown his hand.

Lastly, this would explain why he lingered on in the town, and loved to pry, and peer, and gather every scrap of news.

Such were my foundations of belief.

I wandered home guided by instinct, for I was past noticing anything, this new and startling fact, as I deemed it, absorbing all my faculties. I had been no match for this crafty plotter in the days which were past, but I was resolved he would now find in me a foeman worthy of his steel.

Alas! how true are these words, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

I could not eat, I could do nothing but think and better think. I brought out the ring and examined it again. I was in a fever of conjecture, a whirl of design. I recognised that this might be a turning-point in my career, and my path was beset with difficulties, while my brain was as yet in no fit state to meet and master them.

The dark winter's night drew on apace as I sat by my tiny fire and toasted my feet, for they were cold.

At such a time the brain needs nourishment and the blood leaves the extremities, and, as we brethren of the scalpel say, is determined to the cerebrum. It was thus that Mistress Soorock found me when she entered; but I was so absorbed I scarce noticed her, and after a word or two she said she had a message for me, "brocht by a wee laddie wha had gaun aff like a shot."

"A message?" I cried.

"Ay," she answered, "in writin'. But I sair misdoot me ye're worse, Maister Allan; why, ma puir lad, your supper is no' tasted."

"No matter," I said, "quick, give it me."

She shook her head, but handed me a piece of folded paper, and, after glancing doubtfully at me and then at the untouched food, she left me, shaking her head and muttering to herself; but I paid no heed.

Silas Solid had said I should hear from him before the two days were out, but this was quick work.

The note was sealed with a wafer.

I opened it hurriedly, and then stared at the writing in dull surprise and great bewilderment, for this was what I read:—

"For God's sake, come quickly! My father is ill and like to die. They say you have some skill in sickness, and I am alone. You will know the house by the risp on the door and the outside stair. It is in the Grassmarket, the third from the West Port on the south side.

(Signed)

"DOROTHY."

Here was a new development.

My first thought was that it might be a ruse on Solid's part, some trick to get me in his power; but a second look at the letter convinced me it had indeed come from Dorothy Wayward. I knew her pretty hand and the little twirl she gave to the tails of her y's, and yet, to make assurance doubly sure, I went to my private desk and took two sheets from a drawer, in which they had been a year or more. They were little verses she had written, the one to a wood pigeon, the other on our old keep at Erkinholme, and, I say it without shame, I had taken the liberty of keeping them

when they had fallen one day from between the leaves of a book in which she had been reading. They were perhaps nothing wonderful as poems, though they had a pleasing rhythm and a fine freshness about them, but they would serve my purpose at the present time, and so I laid them side by side with the letter, and there could be no doubt that the same fair hand had traced each of the three.

"She was in Edinburgh, then, and in trouble?" Away went all my thoughts about Silas Solid and his plottings, my brain was in a moment swept clear of all the gloomy forebodings and doubtings and uneasiness which had possessed it a moment before, and was filled with a vision of the tall and graceful English lass who had played such sore havoc with my sense and peace of mind in the good old days by side of Tweed. I pictured to myself, as I rose and threw a cloak about my shoulders, her face tear-stained as she hung over her sick father, and tended him with cool and dainty fingers, and soothed him with gentle words, or perchance with the air of one of our quaint Scotch psalms, such as my mother had taught her, and which had often sent me to sleep when I had been wakeful and restless as a bairn.

And with these imaginings mingled others, as I looked to my pistol flint and crammed some food into my mouth. This was the lass who had called me bitter names and chosen another before me, no doubt a better man, but still another. And now, by a turn of fortune's wheel, she had to appeal to me. Well, she would find me generous. I would repay good for evil; I would do my best for her sick father, this mysterious parent she had known so little about.

Then again, I rather liked that phrase, "they say you have some skill in sickness," and not for the reason Pittendreigh would have enjoyed it. I did not know how long she had been in the city, for my mother had written me no word about her, but I fancied it had been merely for a short period, and yet my fame had already reached her. No doubt she had heard the story of old Dame Campbell, or maybe had fallen in with some to whom I had sold Callender's cask-washings or old Adam's pills, and who had benefited thereby. Besides, a few folk had indeed consulted me as to their ailments, and I had given them

relief, more by good luck than good guidance it is true, but none the less it was likely they had sung my praises.

It was a great moment for me as I stole softly down the stairs to avoid rousing Mistress Soorock, who would have turned the key on me had she found her lodger, but lately at death's door, stealing out at ten of the clock on a night of bitter frost. When I reached the street, however, I paused a moment. It was well to "ca' canny," as we say in Scotland, and, as we also say, to "gang warily." There might be more in this than met the eye. It will be seen that I was growing suspicious. I had always been possessed of some caution, though of a peculiar kind. In any case, it would do no harm to have my three trusty lads at my back, and I resolved to take them with me on my visit of mercy if I could find them.

Dorothy had said to come quickly, and so I ran to the Potterrow, and by great good luck found "the Philistines" about to go to sleep. They reposed on the floor at night, each wrapped in his plaid and with a weapon near him, for they had been born suspicious. Every Highlandman is, as far as I can see. Their faces spoke to their joy at seeing me again on my feet, and indeed I knew, from what Jamie had told me, that they had hung about the Row, when my life hung in the balance, to hear news of my progress or the reverse, though they had been afraid to venture in to see me, having been born shy as well as suspicious. This is another characteristic of those who live amongst the hills, which, however, only shows at certain times, and they are apt to lose it when they often meet the Sassenach, and become just the reverse. They were but too pleased to do me a service, and followed me at a safe distance, taking up post within earshot of the house, which I readily found, and clearly understanding that if I whistled loud and shrilly, as I could do, they were to rush to my assistance, and, in any case, to look in upon me within the half-hour if I did not appear. I felt half ashamed of these precautions, but mounted the stair and tirmed at the risp.

The door was speedily opened, and there, with a lamp in her hand, stood Dorothy. It was a sight for sore eyes to see her, in a dress of some warm red stuff, the glow from

the light on her face showing up her heightened colour and the richly hued hair, which clustered lovingly on her white forehead, and was gathered up above her tiny ears. She looked older than she had done, taller and more shapely, if that were possible, and as she raised the lamp till she could scan my features she made as pretty a picture as I have ever seen. She gave a little cry, and then laid her hand upon my arm, while there was a grateful look in her eyes and a pleased smile on her lips, which made me want to stand thus for ever.

Just then I could scarce realise it was indeed the Dorothy who had been my playmate and had spurned me, but I recovered myself quickly and put on a grave and solemn look, as though her presence were nothing to me, and I had merely come to give what relief I could to a poor sufferer.

"So it is you, Allan?" she said softly, as I followed her within. "Ah me, but you are changed; I would scarce have known you. But it is kind of you to come."

I waved my hand and placed my hat upon the table, for to tell the truth, the sound of her voice, with its dainty English accent, stirred me more than I had thought possible, and besides, I was determined to play my part.

"You are not angry?" she said, in pleading tones, and again she laid her hand on my arm.

I merely waved my hand again.

"Your father?" I queried.

"He is in bed there," she answered, pointing to a recess in the far corner of which I could see a coverlet and the outline of two feet.

"Has he been long ill?" I asked, looking quietly at her and speaking very composedly.

"He has been ailing a day or so, but grew worse a few hours since."

"What may be his symptoms?"

"I cannot tell; I only know he is in sore pain, and has been groaning much and talking foolishly."

"Ah!" said I, which, as upon another occasion, might have meant much, but in reality meant very little.

"There, listen to him!" she said, as a sound came from the recess, a sound as of a man in mortal agony.

It scared me as much as it scared her.

"This must mean internal inflammation," said I, in a learned voice.

Again the sound reached us though now it was somewhat different; a sort of wild sob mingled with the groanings.

"I fear he may die," she said, with a choke in her voice, "and I have only just found him after all these years, and I am all alone." The tears had come into her eyes and trembled on her lashes.

"No, no," I said soothingly, and patted her on the shoulder with the air of a grandfather, "we shall speedily have him easier."

I spoke confidently, though Heaven knows I had no ideas beyond poultices and the hot fomentation, and felt as if both these remedies were inside me.

But it would never do to show lack of confidence before the lass I worshipped in secret, and who looked to me to save her father. She smiled at me through her tears, and I walked quickly to the bedside, half making up my mind as to what was the matter ere I saw my patient.

But my patient was ready for me, and rose on his elbow to receive me, and greeted me with a sneer and a harsh laugh.

I staggered back with a shout, and wondered whether I was standing on my head or my heels, while like a flash all became clear to me. I felt myself to be in deadly danger, and no wonder.

The sick man, Silas Solid, and the assassin were one and the same.

It will be remembered I had never seen Doctor Solid save by day, and now in the lamplight the unwholesome yellow tinge had vanished from his skin, which looked white and waxy. It will be remembered he was colourless and had scarce any well-marked features, and now I saw that it had been the contrast between his face and the false black hair and black eyebrows which had made his countenance seem so vague and impressionless when he had passed as a wayfarer at the "Magpie." It will be remembered that his chin alone had aught of distinction in it, bearing a bristle-covered mound of skin, like a large, white, rounded pimple, and the reason of the dark patch was plain to me.

And at last I had solved, or had solved for me, a dozen mysteries. I remembered the start he had given when he stood beside his horse, I understood why he had drugged me, I saw the fiendish cleverness which had made me do his bidding and his dirty work. I did not marvel now that I had stumbled upon him as I chased the murderer of the man with the ring, and my brain whirled with the shock, but began questioning anew. He was a mass of deception, a walking cheat, a sneaking spy, God alone knew what he was not, and he was Dorothy's father! It was as though I had been struck a heavy blow, which for a brief space arrested every movement, and yet left my head clear and able to think, ay, and able to act a moment later.

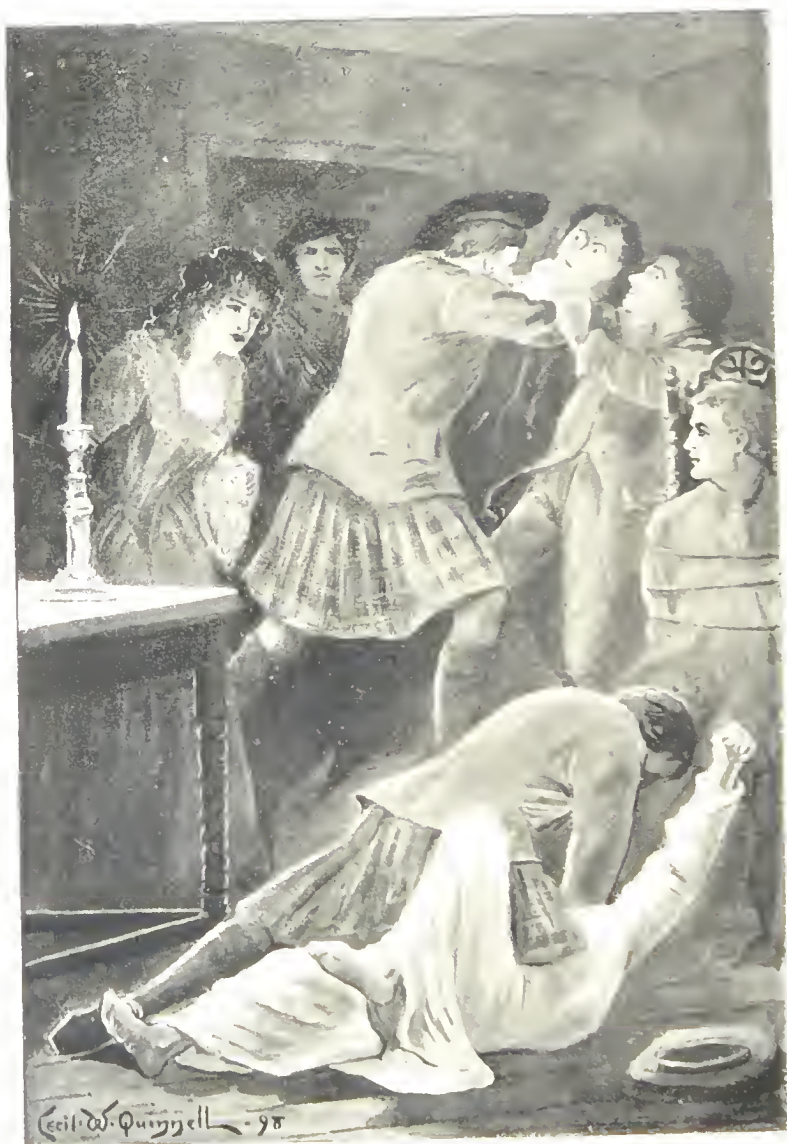
I snatched at my pistol, I heard the girl give a cry of fear and astonishment, and then the door of a press flew open, and two men darted at me and bore me to the ground. This was but a further link in the chain of evidence, for these were the fellows who had dogged me day and night. I was powerless in their hands, but I made no effort, for I was stunned by a thought which had come to me.

Silas Solid was Dorothy's father, and she his willing tool. He had used her as a lure to drag me into his snare. She had aided and abetted him in this vile design upon my life and liberty, for I had no hope of mercy from such a villain. And yet I would not believe it: in my inmost heart I trusted her, but I was resolved to put her to the test. They bound my arms behind me, and lashed me to a chair back, while Silas Solid, or whatever his accursed name might be, sat up in bed and chuckled.

I turned my head and looked at Dorothy. She was leaning heavily against the table, looking wildly about her, her bosom heaving and her cheeks very pale.

"This is kind of you," I said, using her own words.

She never answered, but snatching up a knife which lay near her hand she rushed at me, and I saw she meant to sever the cords, and blessed her; and then a feeling of glorious triumph, of supreme delight possessed me, for this attempt at rescue on her part brought to my memory the means of escape I myself had provided in the case of just such a calamity befalling me as had befallen.



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I writhed with joy, if one can do such a thing.

She was seized by one of the men and pushed backwards, gently enough, while Doctor Solid very sternly bade her desist, telling her she knew nothing, and was a fool for her pains.

"So," he said, turning to me, "we meet again, young sir, and you find that it is madness to trifle where I am concerned. Leave the room, Dorothy," he added, "and wait in your own chamber."

I whistled long and loud, once and then again.

"Quick!" he screamed, "bar the door! curse you, bar the door!" and sprang from his bed, robed in his night-shirt and a pair of grey hose, through the holes of which his toes stuck out, as I noticed even at that moment.

He was too late.

There came the sound of heavy footsteps upon the stairs, the door was flung back violently, so that it clattered against the wall, and the three great lads sprang into the room. It was easy to see they were well versed in this game. Kenneth swung the oak to again and set his back against it, his skene dhu glittering in his fist. Malcolm with a bound was upon Silas Solid and hurled him to the floor, gripping his throat and kneeling upon his outstretched arms. With a rush the mighty Donald reached the two men who guarded me. He seized them one in each hand, and though I could not see the deed done from where I sat, I heard their skulls come crack together with a dull sound, as when wood beats upon wood, and knew I had no more to dread from them.

"Have no fear, Dorothy!" I cried, for the poor lass was cowering in a corner, terrified out of her wits, as who would not have been at such a scene? "Now, Kenneth," I went on, "there are no more, so set me free."

A rip, a wrench, and I was a prisoner no longer but a judge. I could have laughed at the sight before me,—the arch-villain purple in the face and helpless as a child, his two myrmidons half stunned and all in a heap,—and I would have laughed had it not been for Dorothy's presence. She had recovered from her first alarm, and now ran to her father's help, and strove to drag Malcolm's bulky frame from off his prostrate body.

I bade Kenneth tell his brother to leave go his hold, and then thanking them briefly I gave the two wretches, who were slowly coming to their senses, into their custody, and charged them to take both without delay to the guard-house, but to say nothing, and then to return.

They saluted me solemnly and departed without a word, only it was very evident that the last few minutes had been greatly to their liking. The door closed behind them and I was left alone with Dorothy and the half-strangled figure which lay still and motionless before us.

I knelt beside it, and she was so close to me that her hair brushed my face; but though I was inwardly in a tumult I was to all appearance calm and collected.

"Fetch water," I said shortly; "he will soon come to himself."

With a wet cloth I sponged his face, which had plenty of colour in it now, though not of a pleasing kind, and I soon saw he was far from being a dead man. As I did my best to restore him the thought struck me that my ideas must be wrong, my conclusions faulty; for if this man was a Jacobite why had he shot down the Jacobite agent? And then again I remembered I had no proof that the man who had been murdered was a Jacobite at all, unless it might be from the half-observed crown and the letter M, which I took to mean Mary, on the signet. I seemed to have given free rein to my precious imaginings, and now, it would appear, I was farther from the truth than ever. But this thought was speedily driven out of my mind by what I had learned a few minutes before.

This cunning, scheming, to me loathsome being, was the father of the fair maid who stood at my side pale and trembling; this was the man who had been forced to fly from England for some crime or other.

I could well credit the latter as a fact, but that he should be Dorothy's father! I looked from one to the other, but could trace no likeness between them.

His low, wrinkled forehead bore no resemblance to her pure white brow; those pig-like eyes of his, which had opened once or twice, could surely not be kin to her great grey-tinted ones, so merry in expression, so steady in their gaze.

Surely the pitted, greasy cheeks and long, keen nose were never those of the father of the lass whose skin was smooth as velvet and her nose dainty and high-bred; and what relation could there be between his slit-like, crafty, pale-lipped mouth and her ruddy, smiling lips? Above all, I could not fancy that heavy, curling chin bore any kinship to Dorothy's, which was soft and rounded, and fit to turn a man's head; for we can judge of character from the shape of the chin, just as it is from the lower jawbone we judge of age.

The chin of Silas Solid spoke of ambition, of doggedness, of wiliness, of cruelty.

It was a vile chin.

That of Dorothy told of humour, kindness, and good nature, though it had in it just a little touch of resolution and mayhap temper, which served but to add to its beauty and confer distinction. It was a chin which Venus might have envied.

Truly, if this man were her father, her mother must have been well worth the seeing.

"Pardon me," said I, when Silas Solid had gasped once or twice and his face had become colourless again, "but are you certain that this, this"—

"You mean that he is my father?" she said quickly. "Why, of course; he is Sir Oliver Wayward," she added, with a touch of pride which had in it something of sadness. "But how came you to know him, and what does this all mean?"

I could scarce tell her that I had first met him in the guise of a robber, then as a cowardly assassin, then as a cheat and liar, and that all this meant a deadly enmity and the working out of some dark and secret plot.

"Ah, I see," she said. "He has your book; no doubt you met at the college."

"Yes," I answered soberly, "we have met at the college."

"Even so," said a voice.

It was the harsh voice of Doctor Silas Solid.

He had come to his senses very quickly and now struggled up into a sitting posture and smiled grimly at us, his thin lips tightly pressed together, while he felt at his throat with one lean hand.

I had hoped in some way to warn Dorothy against him, but I could not do so now.

"That fellow must have very excellent muscles of adduction," said he, "he well-nigh had my neck in pulp."

I could have wished that Malcolm's muscles had been stronger still, but I merely helped him to rise, which he did with difficulty, and held his hand pressed against his back as though to give support.

"I am better, daughter," he said. "There has been a misunderstanding, which I shall explain at a later date. At present you are permitted to retire."

"But"—she began.

"But me no buts," said Silas Solid, "and pray obey your father."

"A moment," said I. "Is she indeed your daughter?"

"She is," he answered, "but," he sneered and gave a sort of dry cackle, "she is not for you, Master Oliphant."

"Have done," I cried fiercely, for Dorothy's face had become white and pained, and it struck me that whatever affection she had borne this man who claimed kinship with her had been sorely tested by his coarse, unfeeling speech.

I no doubt looked my credulity, for he said sharply—

"I shall very soon give you proofs, my young sir," and then he turned and looked at the girl. He did nothing more, merely stared hard at her across the table, and she winced before him, and then very slowly slipped backwards and passed out of sight into an inner room, though all the time she seemed to be struggling against his baneful glance.

It was as when a hideous serpent fascinates a lovely bird, only in this case the bird was driven from the snake, whereas in nature it flutters towards it. The analogy crossed my mind even then as I witnessed the scene. "Heaven grant," I muttered, "that the final end be as different," and resolved to free Dorothy from this man's power, who, father or no father, could do her naught but harm. Meanwhile I had nothing to fear from him, for the Campbells would return in a short time, and then I could do as I liked with him. Dressed, or rather undressed, as he was, he took a seat at the table and beckoned me to do the same. I sat down with my back to the door.

"Now," said he, "let us understand each other."

"I wish no words with an assassin," I replied, in a low voice.

"No one asked you to converse in such company," said he coldly. "If you intended your words to apply to me you are in grievous error, for let me tell you I am no assassin, I am an executioner."

"An executioner?"

"Even so, of the King's justice. And now listen, and do not speak till I have finished."

To hear him one might have imagined he had won this game and was dictating terms, but I kept silent.

"As you are aware," said he, speaking quickly, "I am more than I appeared to be, nor shall I tell you all I really am; but let it suffice you to know that I, Sir Oliver Wayward, for certain reasons had to leave England many years ago. As a wanderer I turned to the study of medicine, and I have studied it to some effect."

I nodded, for I knew his powers.

"I am beholden to you for your condescension," he sneered, in such a way that I flushed hotly, for I felt the point of his sarcasm. It was as if a beardless, raw recruit had praised a marshal.

"Time passed, and I wearied to see my native land and my family, which consisted of two girls, their mother having died when the younger of the twain was an infant. That infant was here a moment since. Things had changed, but I was remembered—remembered, however, only as a determined man with certain gifts not common to all; and so when there was likely to be trouble my services were called upon.

"As a result I came to Scotland and fell in with you. Under such conditions every source of information is of value. You babbled to me of Erkinholme, where my daughter was. I sucked you of your knowledge, and took from you what I required. I have read your book. It is trash; you can have it again when I have done."

I was about to answer him in his own words, but he held up his hand, and I did not speak; nor did I notice that it was his left hand he raised.

"You fell foul of me again," he said, "when I had to do an act repellent to me as to you, but necessary for the peace

of the realm. You know the rest. It is easy to hide a cloak and cane in an entry as I did to-day. You have been as water in my hands till this night, when matters had reached a crisis, and I needed that ring at once. You have outwitted me, I own it; but it is for the last time. You shall hand over that ring within the hour, sending one of these wild fellows for it."

Like a flash I remembered the ring was in my pocket, where I had put it when Dorothy's note had set me forth upon this adventure. I was so sure of myself and of him that I merely smiled.

"I shall not," I said.

"So?" he exclaimed, in a harsh, deep voice.

"No," I replied, "for I have it with me."

"Indeed," he said, betraying not the slightest emotion, "then lay it on the table."

I merely smiled again, for I fancied I heard the Campbells at the door.

"In the King's name," he thundered, and the smile faded from my lips.

CHAPTER XVIII

CAPTAIN LE FANU

IT was my own pistol which was levelled at my head, and Silas Solid held it. It had fallen from my grasp in the scuffle, and in some way or other, as he lay upon the floor, he had become possessed of it. The boldness of his words was no longer a matter of surprise to me, for the pendulum had swung again to his side. I was in his power. There, two feet away, was a little round hole which a moment later might have its counterpart in me.

Beyond it was the set and evil face of Dorothy's father. What was I to do?

After all I was on his side, if his tale were true. He might be a government spy, but I was also for law and order. His methods were vile, but he was playing in a game with high stakes, the very highest.

And yet, well, I hated to be thus forced and to be thus beaten. Besides, I knew him to be a liar in the past, though I fancied that on this occasion he had spoken truth.

It was a case of my dourness against my life.

Already my hand stole towards my inner pocket, where the cause of all this trouble rested, when there came a loud rapping at the outer door. The Campbells had returned.

In a moment I pushed the table against him with all my force, darted up, bent double, and ran across the room.

There was a click, a curse. The pistol had missed fire.

I threw open the door and sprang outside in case he should let fly at me again, and before I could cry out, or see anything, or think at all, a cloak was thrown over my head, made fast about my neck, and I was bundled down the stairs, gripped on either side in a powerful grasp. I tried to speak, to utter a protest, but my voice was muffled, and I was dragged along, while so surprised was I by this

new occurrence that I scarce resisted. I could only surmise that Solid's ruffians had in some way escaped or been set free, and that they had returned before my henchmen.

But I was very soon convinced that this was not the case, for though I could not make myself heard I could catch what others said, and as we halted there came footsteps, and then a gruff voice swearing at the cold.

"Hae ye gotten the deevil?" it went on. "Ay, but ye've been gey quick about it. Weel, weel, what'll the Duke dae wi' him?"

I did not hear the answer, but there was a coarse laugh, and then the gruff voice spoke again.

"Richt ye are, and pray the Lord a' these rebels gang the same way, for it was ane o' the rascals gied me the prog whilk put me tae ma bed for mony a day; a one-leggit vagabond he was."

From this I guessed I was at the West Port, and that once outside the town I should be lost, though what the Duke might want with me I could not conceive. I took a long breath of what air there was within the cloak folds, and then suddenly wrenched myself free. With one hand I struck out violently in all directions, with the other I tore at the neck fastenings; but ere I could get quit of my muffings, the whole three of them leapt upon me, and I was borne down under their weight, turned on my face, and had my hands lashed behind me.

"Curse the fellow!" growled a strange voice, "he has ta'en the skin frae aff ma shin banes."

"Let me hae a kick at him for auld lang syne," said the gatekeeper.

"Kick awa' and welcome," answered one of the others, who was busy tying me up, and the brute drove his heavy boot into my ribs till I gasped for breath and well-nigh shouted with the pain. They jerked me to my feet, and one of them bade me to have done with fooling if I did not wish my ears slit; after which they gave the password, I heard the key rattle in the lock, and the great gate swing open.

"A gude nicht tae ye and a safe ride," shouted the warder

One answered him to the same effect, but the other laughed hoarsely, and I heard him say to his comrade—

“A rare jest that, Jock. The muckle fule, he little kens whaur we ride the nicht.”

The other only grunted, and they hurried me on.

In a few minutes I could tell we had reached a third man who had horses with him, and without delay I was hoisted into a saddle, and we moved quickly away. I was nearly choked by this time, and would have lost my senses had not one of them cut the cloth with a knife, the point of which grazed my cheek as he did so. For all that I could not see out, but I noticed that the hoof strokes sounded faint, and guessed the hoofs were swathed in cloths to deaden noise. They had passed a rope round my middle, and as far as I could tell fastened it to their own bodies on either side; and though this gave me some feeling of security, I by no means enjoyed the sensation of riding at a rapid trot in total darkness, and with my arms bound and helpless. Moreover, my side pained me when I drew breath, and I was like to cry with vexation.

I had cornered Doctor Solid, only to see him escape; I had found Dorothy, only to lose her; I had seen my way clearly to a certain issue, and now Heaven alone knew what was about to happen. From what I had heard I fancied I was in the hands of those who owned James as King, and I wondered what interest they had in me; and then I remembered the fatal ring. Depend upon it, they had somehow learned that it was in my possession, and had thus kidnapped me. What was more, they had kidnapped the signet. Truly the plot thickened.

I could almost laugh at Silas Solid's discomfiture, but the thought of Dorothy, who was in his power, kept me very sober, as did the doubts I had as to my own fate.

My feet had found stirrups, and so I rode in fair comfort until we changed the trot to a canter, and the canter to a gallop, and swept over some very rough ground. Then, indeed, I gripped my saddle with my knees and leaned well forwards in mortal fear of having my neck broken despite the rope which pulled this way and that, for in many places there seemed no room for three to ride abreast. After what seemed an age of going up and down dale, and careering along the level, though not half an hour could have passed, my captors drew rein and I was dragged from the

saddle and made to descend a steep bank, while from the sniff of the air which came to me through the hole in the cloak I knew we were near the sea, and besides, I could catch the sound of running water and of breaking waves as I had heard them twice before on the lonely shore by the links o' Leith, whither I had gone upon a holiday, the briny deep being something new and very strange to me in those days.

"Y' have been quick, boys," said a voice, which I knew to be that of a man of quality. "Bring the prisoner here, and handy with the lantern there. Why, what is this?"

The cloak was whipped off my head, and I found myself face to face with a very fine figure of a man in a great plumed hat, a scarlet coat with a sash across it, and long black boots reaching to his hips, a man who, as he looked at me, burst into a torrent of oaths and blasphemies in what seemed to be half a dozen different tongues.

"Blast your eyes!" he cried furiously, "were ever such muddleheads, such damned addlepates, such pig-headed fools?"

The three men who had brought me to him shrank back at his violent words and still more violent gestures.

"What's the matter, captain?" asked a heavy-featured man who stood beside him, a fellow who would have passed anywhere as a soldier.

"Matter?" roared the captain, "the cursed idiots have taken the wrong man. Is not that matter enough?"

"Art sure?"

"Sure? Does this look like a middle-sized, middle-aged rogue with white hair and a pale face? What does this mean, varlets?"

It was clear to me that it meant I had been captured in place of Silas Solid, or Sir Oliver, to give him his title. My captors had apparently lost their wits, so I plucked up courage.

"May it please you"—I began.

"May it please you to hold your tongue," roared this bully, giving me a sounding buffet on the side of the head, which sent me reeling into the man beside him; and I would have fallen had not the latter caught me, and as he did so he whispered, "Keep a good heart, lad, but keep thy mouth shut also."

I thanked him with a look which I doubt if he saw in the darkness, and then stood silent, while between them the three men stammered out their tale.

"God be my witness," said the captain, when they had made an end, "that never in all my days have I met such"—he waved his hand as though he could not find a word strong enough to express his meaning.

"Was it too much for ye to imagine there might be more than one man in a house, eh? I know how it was. Y'are a white-livered crew of cowardly dogs who wanted the job over, and a pretty mess y'have made o't, curse you," he added savagely, and struck at the nearest man, who in trying to avoid him lost his footing and fell into the river; for we stood in a dell traversed by a fairly broad and deep stream, which entered the sea a few yards beyond. I knew it must be the mouth of the Almond water, for old Adam had a fine tale of a sea trout he had landed on this spot, a goodly fish, which to my certain knowledge had increased three pounds in a year.

The fellow quickly scrambled out, and the sight of his dripping clothes, his shivering frame, and chattering teeth seemed to appease the captain in some measure, for he gave a great laugh.

"What are we to do with this great loon?" said he, flashing the lantern in my face.

"You had best search him in the first place and question him in the second," said his companion. "He seems a decent youth."

"To —— with his decency," said the leader, who was first in this choice language as he was in command. He handed the lantern to the officer, and with his own fingers picked my pockets, throwing their contents on the ground, till I longed to have my fists free. I had got a better view of him by this time, and he was as handsome as he was foul-mouthed. He had a long, reddish moustache, waxed and curled, which suited the fresh colour of his face and was in marked contrast to his bold dark eyes and heavy eyebrows. A long bluish scar marred his forehead, running from his outer eye angle on the left side to and under the brim of his hat, but it had the look of an honourable wound. For the rest, he was tall and broadly built, with an excellent

carriage, and his coat fitted him to a nicety, though it was travel-stained and scarce as bright as it once had been.

He looked a roué and a dare-devil, and I had no doubt he was both. It was not long before he came to the pocket wherein lay the ring, and in a moment he had whipped it out.

"Quick with the light," he said. "Zounds! but we have the right bird after all, or spit me for a lark. There is a guinea for you, boys," and he tossed a coin to the men.

"So, my pretty fellow," he said, turning to me as they scrambled for it, "you are the spy?"

"Pardon me"—I began.

"May I be hung if I would do any such thing; but Mar will see to that, I warrant. We are in luck, sergeant."

"So it seems," answered the other, "but we had best away; the tide just serves, and the boat will be deeper now."

"I am no spy," I said hoarsely; "I can explain all. You have taken the wrong man."

"Bedad, but we have the right ring, anyhow!" cried the captain, "and it matters little who swings. Bring the dirty German along, boys."

From his speech I fancied he was Irish, and such indeed he was, by name le Fanu, of French descent and no morals, as I learned later from one who did not love him.

"But, sir," I said, "this is a crime. I assure you, on my honour"—

"I shall hit you on the mouth," rejoined the captain, "if you do not keep it shut," and I saw it was worse than useless to argue with him, for from his breath as he searched me it was plain he had been drinking, and he was in a quarrelsome, dangerous mood. In less time than it takes to tell I found myself lying in the foot of a boat with half an inch of dirty water washing about me, and all hope of escape gone for the present. We speedily shoved off, and I lay cramped and stiff, and listened to the monotonous creak of the oars in the rowlocks and the gurgle and lap of the sea as it struck us on the bows, for there seemed to be a kind of bar at the river's mouth. There

were five of us in the boat, the wet one having stayed behind with the horses, and the captain sat in the stern-sheets with the sergeant, while the other two rowed the little craft out into the Firth, swinging back and forwards in silence, save when they spat over the side, which was not infrequently. It was bitterly cold, though very calm. The captain and the sergeant were wrapped in heavy cloaks, and the others were kept warm by their work, but my hands were bathed in the icy wash, and I felt numbed and miserable. I could see nothing but the outlines of our crew and the boat's side, with away above a black-blue sky sprinkled with stars of unusual brilliancy. I thought of many things as I endured the vilest night, as far as physical suffering goes, which I had ever known. I kept recalling Dorothy as I had last seen her, and from that I drifted on to Henry Gering, from whom I had never heard; and then I wondered what Mistress Soorock and Callender would say to my disappearance, and what they would think at Erkinholme. I had wanted to see life, and verily I had seen life and death, and a few other things beside. It was strange how much had befallen me, while others had gone jogging along as usual. I had reached the capital and the edge of a whirlpool of plot and plotting at one and the same time. I had drawn nearer and nearer to the centre, and now I could not tell whether I should sink or swim, whether I should haply win through, or be sucked downwards and perish in the troubled waters.

Thus I mused in a dull, hopeless way, till I was roused by something being thrown over me. It was the sergeant's cloak, which he himself had given me, le Fanu having fallen asleep, as we crept across the estuary towards the shore of Fife.

I had found a friend, then, and was full of gratitude for the kindly act, all the kindlier as it left him exposed to the chilling nip of the black frost; but I had no chance of showing my gratefulness, not even when the keel grated on a shingly beach and I was bundled ashore, where the others stamped and thumped themselves into a glow, while the cloak was snatched from me before the captain had noted that it had served to warm my heart if not my frame. The sergeant whistled thrice as the men dragged

the boat a half-length out of the sea, and presently an answering whistle shrilled out, and we set off in a body, finding a narrow path which led inland over rough, broken ground, sparsely dotted with stunted trees and huge boulders with veins of white rock showing in them, which glimmered faintly in the darkness. Presently we struck a road bounded by neither hedge nor dyke, and shortly thereafter, in a hollow shrouded by low copsewood, came upon a tiny dwelling, at the door of which stood a knot of horses, champing at their bits, and every now and then striking an iron-shod hoof smartly on the frost-bound earth, so that as we neared them the air was full of a metallic tinkling. As I was for the second time hoisted into a saddle, the captain vanished indoors, whence, as a result of his presence, there came a squeal or two, and then a sound there was no mistaking, at which our late boat's crew gurgled in their throats, while the sergeant paced to and fro impatiently, and tugged fiercely at the stiff-set bristles of his upper lip. Our leader appeared at the doorway, and I fancied I saw a woman's face looking out at us from over his shoulder. At anyrate, he had company in the shape of a huge tankard which he held in his left hand.

"Faith, sergeant," said he, "the devil take me if I ride later than an hour hence. Are ye too much of a Puritan to wet your whistle? Bedad, give me a place where ye can kiss a mug in two ways. Come on with ye; the boys will mind the dirty German."

The other shook his head, and whispered something in le Fanu's ear.

"Out upon ye, man!" roared the latter, "are we so well paid that we may not take an hour now and then? What's more, we've been quick at the job, so keep your canting mouth shut if ye will not open it for right good liquor. The Virgin only knows what ill wind blew ye across my trail, for spit me if ye be aught of a Cavalier," and with that le Fanu got him indoors, and presently we heard him trolling a ditty more tuneful than moral, in a voice more loud than sober. The sergeant was clearly in a fret at this delay, and thrice ventured to remonstrate; but no sooner did he set his head within than he was greeted by a volley of oaths, and on the last occasion by a beer-

jug as well, which shivered into pieces against the lintel. And then he did a curious thing, and as it seemed to me a dangerous one, for he coolly entered the house, and, after a babel of noise, came in sight, steadying the captain by a tight grip on his coat collar, and aweing him by a pistol at his lug. The latter swore and grumbled, but all to no purpose, and had perforce to mount and ride with us, while there was a very grim look on the face of his under officer, and yet methought I caught a twinkle in his deep-set eyes as he passed through the narrow ray of light which streamed from out the window of this wayside and doubtful inn.

For the nonce he had effectually cowed the captain, who, as I learned afterwards, was a poltroon when in his cups, though of high courage at other times; a reverse of what I have found to be generally the case, and perchance due to some action of the potent spirit on the brain tissues, a question of interest worthy of investigation. However that may be, it does not concern my tale of how we rode slowly through "the wee hoors," and baited our beasts at Dunfermline, where no one was yet stirring. As the grey dawn and the mist of a winter's morning mingled to cheer and further chill us, we clattered on the road to Dollar, a tiny hamlet by the Devon river, with away beyond it the round-backed hills of Ochil.

By this time I felt a trifle better in body if not in mind, for they had given me a snack of food and a draught of hot-spiced ale, which served to raise my spirits so that I began to cast about in my mind for a way of escape. The captain also had improved in body, in so far that he sat his horse easily and had taken command again, but at first he was very sullen and morose. No doubt the sergeant's summary method of dealing with his lapse of duty rankled in his mind, but he seemed to fear the quiet, honest-eyed soldier who pounded behind him, for he never spoke to him, but instead, after a time, began to vent his spleen on me.

I cannot set down all he said, for he was coarse and offensive to a degree, but I suffered him peaceably, being too intent on watching the nature of the country to pay much heed to his foul and railing tongue. We were on

the verge of that wild stretch of hilly land which reaches from Forth to Tay, a lonely, desolate region of moor and glen, morass and peat bog, such as I had not before seen, though the round-topped slopes, grass-grown or heather-dotted, reminded me in some measure of the Tweed country as it is in the far uplands.

We were traversing a cattle track leading towards the offshoots of the Ochils, and it seemed to me that could I get clear I might have some chance of escape, and that if I delayed all chance would soon be gone. My lashings had got loose, and I was no longer bound on either side to the men who formed my escort; and, in addition, fortune for once in a way favoured me. The captain bade the two men fall behind and rode beside me, the sergeant trotting in front, and acting both as guide and scout. Meanwhile, le Fanu became more and more aggressive in his manner, beyond a doubt stirred by the drink which yet lingered in him, and more than once my anger rose to fever pitch, while I worked stealthily at the rope till I felt I could slip one hand free. All the time I never answered the bully, and this helped to inflame his passion; for if a soft answer turneth away wrath, no answer at all increases it sevenfold.

Thus, after twice putting a question to me and getting no reply, he switched me sharply across the eyes, half blinding me for the moment. The next, as I came to myself, I was aware of his handsome, vicious face close to mine as he leaned toward me, asking if I had got enough or wanted more. The temptation was too great for me, smarting as I was under his cruel blow and uncalled-for insults. By a quick movement I wriggled my left arm clear of the lashings, and, with my clenched fist, dealt him a single, crashing buffet on the mouth, striking from below upwards, with a sidelong swing and the utmost fury; for the easy-going, even-tempered man is the worst when roused, and such for a year past I had been, having kept my hot blood under restraint and my passionate nature in check. His head dropped as though he had been shot, and without a cry he swayed a second, and then lurched from his saddle to the ground. I did not wait to see more, but, wrenching my horse round to the left, I drove my heels into his flanks, and, with a rush,

was off the road and careering over rough, level ground, carpeted with coarse, hummocky grass tufts. There came a shout from behind me, and, glancing round, I saw the sergeant on the road covering me with a pistol, and one of the men in pursuit.

It was a fatal look for me, as at that moment my horse stumbled, came down heavily on his knees, and sent me flying over his head. I landed on my shoulder and escaped unhurt, but was promptly seized by the man who had come after me, and who now dismounted, and, after securing me more firmly than ever, led me back to the sergeant.

"A foolish business, lad," said the latter gravely. "I doubt me you have made a bitter enemy, for you have ruined the captain's beauty once and for ever."

It was true enough. I had split his upper lip and driven his front teeth down his throat, while his nose was broadened and out of shape, and his long moustache, dyed crimson, was dripping at the ends. He lay on his back beside his steed, which had not stirred, nor had he for that matter, the blow having fairly stunned him. He was alive, for his breath blew ruddy bubbles in the froth about his mouth and his eyelids twitched, but he did not seem to be much more. One of the men brought water in his cap from a tiny burn which curled here and there close at hand, while the other loosed his scarlet coat and felt for his heart-beat, and then began feeling his own sides with a puzzled air.

"God bless me, Jock," he said, in a scared voice, "oor ribs run east and west, but dang me if the cap'n's dinna run north and sooth!"

At any other time I would have laughed outright, for the fellow had come upon the stays which le Fanu, like many men of fashion, affected, to better their carriage as they thought, but also to squeeze their livers. Just then, however, I was in no mood for merriment. To tell the truth, I was shocked at the havoc I had wrought, richly as the captain had deserved his punishment, and, moreover, I was downhearted at my failure.

Half an hour passed ere le Fanu showed signs of recovery, but it was clear he was too weak and shaken to travel.

"Ye maun bide here," said the sergeant to the fellow who

had recaptured me, "and had best back to Dollar when he's fit to move. We'll mount the prisoner on your beast, as the other is strained, and we maun push on. Get ahead!" he added, addressing the other when I was in the saddle and after he had taken the ring and a bundle of papers from the fallen leader. In this fashion we left the spot where I had committed a deed which was to make all the difference in the world to me, and had made me an enemy of the most bitter kind.

At the time, however, I counted the incident fortunate, as the sergeant proved himself a pleasant man, and chatted freely enough, telling me who the captain was; and I gathered that he himself had, strange to say, been one of the famous Cameronian regiment in his younger days, and thus it was no wonder he and le Fanu were not suited to each other. I could not learn how he had come to be on the side of the Chevalier, nor to this day do I know what his full name was, for he was a stern and grizzled warrior, with whom I felt I could take no liberties despite his kindly acts.

He came and went from my life like a dull ray of sunlight on a cheerless day, and I always picture him to myself whenever I take a wander in the uplands about the Ale water, or clamber up the sides of the Eildons. His grave, set face and sturdy figure were in keeping with the country we passed through, for we quickly got well amongst the hills, which in shape were like the huge humps of a gigantic dromedary, a strange creature which in my youth, to the great wonderment of all, was exhibited in Edinburgh for a time, and left a lasting impression on my memory. The day was clear and frosty, and the sun had a chalky look, which later changed to a deep, dull red. Where it struck on withered bracken and heather patches there was a colouring of burnt brick and like that of Doctor Solid's old velvet coat, while all around there was a deep silence, broken only by the hoarse croak of a raven or the babbling of a watercourse, not yet ice-bound, though fringed as to the margins with a black or silver crusting. At first we had seen a few sheep, but thereafter we saw no living thing the livelong day save a flight of moor birds in the distance, of tiny feathered bipeds close at hand, and an eagle at a

vast height speeding northwards. The great hill called Dunmyat, a huge mass with somewhat of a peak at one end of its lumpy ridge, which changed in shape as we advanced, served as a guide ; but we were not free from misfortune, the sergeant's horse falling lame, while we lost our way, and the early darkness closed round us while we were still in those solitudes.

On we plodded, fording narrow streams, crossing frozen bogs, and at times bewildered by the dull grey giants on every side of us ; on and on, as speedily as we could, for I gathered there was need of haste. It had been a Friday when I had been taken captive, and it was late on the night following that, as we rounded a shoulder of one of those lonely hills, we saw away to the north of us a ruddy glow against the sky.

It was the light from the outpost camp fires of the army of the Earl of Mar.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BATTLE OF DUNBLANE

AND now I became filled with a lively apprehension of the danger which lay before me. 'Tis true I did not know what the ring portended, but I could scarce hope that Mar or anyone else would believe the tale of how it came to be in my possession. It was only too probable I would be regarded as an accomplice of the government spy, and be granted a short shrift and a long rope or a few leaden pellets. I did not relish the outlook, but could now make no bid for freedom, and instead told the sergeant my story, hurriedly but plainly enough, as we followed a path on the south side of a rapid, rushing stream, small, but with a steep farther bank, which I know now was the Wharrie burn.

"My advice to you, young man," said he, when I had finished, "is to tell John Erskine the truth. A long rigmarole o' nonsense will serve you poorly, and Mar is not a harsh or unjust man, whatever his ither faults may be."

"But," I answered, "I swear most solemnly to you that all I have told you is true, strange though it seems."

"Hoots!" said he, "you waste your breath," and I saw it was hopeless to try and convince him.

Our progress was slow, for the path was very rough and narrow, a mere track on the side of a steep and stony hill, at the base of which the Wharrie ran, and it was not till we had dipped into a valley and crossed the shallow water that we could push on with any speed over the wild moor which stretched away in front of us, and which would have been impassable for horses had it not been for the frost. At last we reached the crest of the waste, and away below us could see the position of the Highland force, which was encamped not far from the river Allan, beside a couple of outlying farmhouses, as I found thereafter. We were almost imme-

diately confronted by a figure in kilt and plaid, which started up from amongst the heather and challenged us sharply, with firelock in readiness. The sergeant replied cheerily, and we were suffered to pass, while the man, who was one of the advanced guard, told us that the Royalist army had occupied Dunblane, some three miles away, and that a battle was imminent, as Mar had reached the camp a few hours before, having been informed by an express of the approach of the enemy. We ran great risk of being shot ere we reached headquarters, for cavalry patrols were guarding all the approaches and sentries on foot occupied every knoll and eminence; but at last, about midnight, we rode into the farmyard where the main body of horse was quartered, and where, in the adjacent house, the Earl was sleeping.

Our arrival caused some stir, but the sergeant kept his own counsel, and I was thrust into a henhouse and made fast to a post, having for company a score of fowls, which cackled and squawked till they found I had not come to wring their necks, when they settled again to their slumbers. The sergeant returned very quickly, bringing me some food and a little milk, though he was not in the best of humours, as he had been refused entry to the Earl's presence, strict orders having been given that Mar was on no account to be disturbed except in event of an attack.

So much he told me, and then hurried away, after fastening me up again and advising me for my own sake to stick to fact; and I do not know what happened till about two hours later, when an officer, booted and spurred, appeared, attended by two cavalry men with a lantern, and I was untied and led out of my temporary prison.

"Now for it," I thought, and a moment later was face to face with the leader of the insurrection. He was seated at a table in the kitchen of the house, on which were papers and a map, and was alone. A couple of candles burned before him, and by their light I saw he was a man with a pale, clever face, clean shaven, and distinctly of a distinguished appearance, though it struck me he looked more of a scholar than a soldier. His expression was anxious and worried, and he started a little as we entered, and leaned forwards to get a view of me.

"Leave the prisoner," he said, "and do one of you take post at the door."

The officer saluted, and retired with his men.

"Your name?" he said sharply.

I answered him respectfully and with a bow, and then there was a silence for a few seconds, during which time we stared at each other, and I endeavoured to look confident and unconcerned.

"The man who brought you here," he went on, "has told me the story which I am given to understand you wish me to believe."

"It is the truth," I said simply.

"Of course," he answered, to my surprise, "of course. Such tales always are," he continued, smiling nervously, and apparently no more at ease than I was.

"I assure you, upon my honour"—I began.

He waved his hand impatiently, and then drew the signet from his pocket, and keeping his eyes fixed on me, made some movement with his fingers. At once the stone rose up on end, and he shook out from underneath it a tiny folded roll of thin paper, which looked at first of no thickness or bulk, till he picked it up and opened it out.

I must have looked my astonishment, for he nodded.

"I truly believe," he said, "you have never seen this before."

"I have not," I answered firmly; "I did not know the secret."

"And you kept the whole matter to yourself?"

"I did."

He questioned me closely upon some points as to my relations with Silas Solid and Pittendreigh.

"You are either a very wise young man or an arrant fool," he said at length, "I am not certain which."

I bowed again.

He smothered a smile, but the anxious look came quickly back to his face.

"Pray," he asked, "are you for James or George?"

"If you will pardon me saying so," I replied, with some assurance, "I believe the best interests of the country are served by the ruling house, but I have never borne arms on either side."

"You seem to me to be an honest idiot," he said hurriedly, but without a trace of offensiveness, "for mark you, I can tell most men by their faces. But you have put me in a devil of a fix, sir, by this Don Quixotism of yours."

I did not know at the time what he meant, and so said nothing.

"Had you no idea what this ring was?"

"I fancied it might aid the cause you lead."

"I see, I see; your action is not so strange as at first appeared. It seems you are a student of medicine, who has been drawn unwittingly into this affair, beguiled by this English spy; but, sir, the matter is very serious. As it is not likely you shall live long," I started, but he never paused, "I do not mind telling you that this ring is the private property of His Majesty James III., an heirloom of the house of Stuart; and this cipher, sir, which you thought fit to retain, is a command not to engage the enemy till he arrives in person with monies and a large force from France. I should have had this, and would have had it but for you, two months ago. You have meddled with very weighty matters to your cost, young man."

"Pardon me, your lordship," I interposed, "it was the spy who shot the messenger."

"Ah yes, to be sure. Why, damn it all, the thing is a perfect riddle. Here I get this order, and the Royalist army close at hand, the clans at fighting pitch, and all in my favour."

He had risen and was striding to and fro in a state of miserable indecision.

"I very much fear I must hang you," he said peevishly, "though it seems hard, does it not? And yet what would you do if you were in my place?"

"I would fight at once," I answered, "and defer the hanging."

He stopped in the middle of his walk and faced me.

"I beg your pardon," said he, "you may be honest, but you are not a fool, and you have pronounced your own sentence."

I looked eagerly at him, for the least respite was welcome.

"I shall engage the enemy at daybreak," he said, as though speaking to himself. "If I am victorious you shall

go free ; if the Duke gains the day, I promise you a hanging, Master Oliphant," and he called the guard.

I stammered out some sort of thanks, for I was fairly bewildered by this curious interview, so different from what I had expected, and my last answer had been given half at random, there being somewhat of a mixture of matters passing through my brain—interest in the man before me, fear at the prospect of an untimely end, astonishment at his strange manner and confidences, all these and much more beside, which there is no occasion for mentioning.

I was locked up again in the henhouse, to the disgust of its occupants, where, wearied from want of sleep, I dozed fitfully, with unpleasant dreams harassing me, till my guard returned and led me out, just as the winter's morning began to creep about us, and lantern and candle lights looked sickly, as a man does after a debauch.

All was now stir and bustle. A trumpet pealed, horses neighed as they felt the chill air upon their nostrils, hoarse voices shouted orders, and from beyond the farm premises, where the clans had lain all night wrapped in their plaids came the skirl and drone of pipes, answered by a throaty cock-crow and the deep roll of a drum. The Forfar and Angus horse formed up, and I was quickly mounted, after being allowed to munch a bannock and drink a jug full of warm milk. I saw the Earl issue from the house looking brisk and cheery, and presently he and his bodyguard moved off and we followed. Without, I found the Highlanders afoot, a great array of bonneted and kilted men, who seemed never to feel the bitter frost, but jested in their native Gaelic as they moved off in companies at a rapid swing, all armed alike with the deadly claymore, while many carried firelocks and some few had pistols in addition.

They vanished into the gloom, for it was very misty, and following them came a body of men dragging cannon, which rumbled and jolted upon the hard road, every rut being filled with solid ice blocks, and every ridge firm as granite.

To this day no one can tell what induced John Erskine to drag these cumbersome pieces of ordnance to the field, for he had neither ammunition with which to charge them, nor gunners who might serve them. It may have been merely

out of bravado and love of display, but I fancy it was to inspire his kilted warriors, who knew little of such death-dealing engines, but revered them exceedingly. The cavalry brought up the rear, and soon we left the road and began to climb upwards to the heights of Sheriffmuir, over which I with my escort had ridden the night before. We moved very silently when once upon open ground, but speedily withal, and as we gained the ridge the two horsemen who guarded me received an order and we wheeled to the left and made off towards the Wharrie burn. By this time it had grown lighter and already the sun was trying to start his daily work, but found it hard to make much way amongst the leaden skies and the floating banks of mist which clung about the hilltops. We quickly reached an empty shepherd's hut, and I was thrust within while my guard made the door secure and took position outside.

To my joy I found there was an opening large enough to permit of my head being thrust through it, and thus I was able to command an extensive prospect over the great expanse of waste land, where was to be fought a fierce and curious fight, which had more bearing on the future of these islands than perhaps many would care to admit.

It may be that some who read of how Mar and Argyll came to blows may pooh pooh the matter, having witnessed greater battles and seen thousands upon thousands waging deadly conflict to the roar of artillery, while the ground shook and trembled under a myriad of horse hoofs, and a pall of smoke hid the light of day. All I can say to such fire-eaters is, that one battle fell to my lot, and that I treasure its memory, for of all scenes that of a battlefield is the finest, despite its cruelties and its horrors. Nothing can make the heart beat so quickly, nothing can stir the blood so well, nothing can make the breath pause so long or cause it to come in such rapid, excited gaspings, as the sight of men in mortal combat.

The old Romans knew this, and made of it a pastime. Savages in every land revel in the sport and relish the spectacle, and I, who have seen it once, do not wonder at them.

As I looked out from my place of vantage I saw the rebel army take post in two long lines upon the heather-

covered uplands, which here and there were dotted with gaunt pines and firs, skeleton-like as to their trunks and lower branches, but with wide-spreading tufted tops standing out black against the sky. A great stillness reigned everywhere, and the air felt like nectar, so keen and cold that it numbed the ear and finger-tips and reddened the nose.

My guards were worthy fellows enough, and answered readily when I questioned them.

They pointed me out the western clans upon the far right, and therefore most distant from me, the Macdonalds, the Macleans, and those of Breadalbane; they showed me where the Camerons, the Stewarts, and the Gordons stood in array; they drew my attention to the small force of horse in the rear, and, far away as the army was, could distinguish some of the leaders. I noticed a strong body posted on a hill apart from the others, but they could not conceive who these might be. Little did we think that the day's fortunes were to turn on this band of men, who were all MacGregors and MacPhersons under that wild cattle-raider Rob Roy, whose daring deeds had made him famous even in Edinburgh town, while he was the terror of Glasgow and the curse of Stirling. Presently upon an eminence to the west appeared a group of horsemen, their figures clear against the cloud masses. I did not need my guards to tell me they were the enemy. Indeed it was the Duke with his staff, but they quickly vanished, and then from the valley came the call of bugles, the Royalist army, four thousand strong, was advancing, the curtain of mist had been rolled up, and the play was about to begin.

Had I chosen my position I could not have been in a better place. The hut commanded a view of both forces, though for the most part they could not see each other, Mar's army having to advance up the eastern slope of the ridge, that of Argyll up the western; but let it be understood the slope on either side was very gradual.

Nor in another sense could I have chosen a more curious position. My sympathies were with the redcoats who now began to show, with the heavy dragoons for the most part on grey chargers, with the royal standard borne by a troop of horse; but should they win I knew that I must swing, should they gain the day the days of my life were numbered.

I fear that just then I devoutly hoped to see them speedily in rapid flight, for somehow my convictions were not quite so strong as they had been when I argued with myself inside the walls of Auld Reekie.

It was the Sabbath, of which the gentle poet Herbert has written—

“Oh day most calm, most bright,
The week were dark but for thy light.”

But the light of this Sabbath day was thrown on two bodies of Scots intent on slaughter and carnage, one of them at least thirsting to be at the other's throats. I looked round at the great lone hills, I heard the murmur of the Wharrie, I smelt the sweet, pure mountain air. All told of peace and restfulness, where soon the red blood should flow, the battle-cry ring, the wounded groan, and the death-rattle sound in many a throat, ay, and the raven and hoodie crow gather to the feast. Truly it was a mighty contrast.

But such thoughts passed speedily, for there came a shout from the Highland host. They were answering their chief, who had asked them their will, and their will was to fight. At once the two lines broke into four columns and moved to the attack. They swept down the hill, they crossed a frozen morass, and sped up the slope. The mountaineers rushed forward at the double in their wild eagerness, and the cavalry galloped behind them. I held my breath and glanced at the men in red. In columns of infantry flanked by horse they were steadily pressing up the other side of the incline. A moment more and the armies would meet.

It seemed to me that the rebels were more intent on the fray and had near twice as many men, and I felt half sad but greatly relieved, for it was in my mind that they must gain the day; and yet there was a grim, quiet look about the soldiers of the Government, an order and steadiness, which might have made me pause.

Together they reached the crest and found themselves face to face. At once there was confusion as each side strove to form line of battle, so that they might bring as many available men as possible to the front. And now it was that discipline told, as the regulars deployed with bayonets fixed, and the Highlanders were hunched into masses, and lost their chance of taking the enemy by surprise

My guard, who had seen service, cursed freely, and even I could see the error of delay. But that delay was brief.

The clans formed some sort of order on the right, and after a sputtering fire, with a mighty yell burst upon the left wing of the Royalist army.

Out rang a rolling volley of musketry, which pealed and echoed amongst the hills, and I could see men falling or staggering back from the line. But the line vanished. It vanished into the streak of red which broadened into a motley throng of many colours, swayed and narrowed, spread, and broke, and joined again.

All this was far from me, but now a shout, a loud cheer, a crackle of small arms made me look at the left wing of the Jacobite array. The Camerons and Stewarts were charging, and were being greeted by a line of fire. It was a scene to stir the most lethargic, but how can one paint with ink the gleam of the claymore, the red flash of the musket, the drifting battle-smoke? How can one portray the scarlet of the Royalists, the waving tartans of the clans with the pen alone? And above all, how can a mere writer do justice to the babel of sounds which accompanies such a strife, the sharp pistol crack, the crash of volleys, the snortings of frightened steeds, the yells of rage, the shouts of triumph, and the death cry?

My eyes were fixed on the surging multitude, my ears filled with the noise of battle, my frame thrilled with the deeds which passed before me. I saw the Royalists break and scatter before the western clans, and the rebel horse sweep in pursuit, while my guards cursed at their ill luck. I saw stout riders sway and fall. I heard the scream of chargers in their agony.

But the right and centre of the regulars stood firm. Their muskets rang out again and again, and the wild warriors of the north fell in scores before them. In vain bold men sprang forward and dropped riddled and lifeless, in vain some pressed on to the bayonet points. The Duke was wise.

A body of dragoons rode furiously across what was usually a quaking bog, and charged the Highlanders in flank. The grey horses and the red men cut their way into the dark masses, and the swords rose and fell as they hacked and

hewed with dripping blades till their hands grew ruddier than their coats.

The clans wavered under this fresh assault, the fray hung in the balance. I looked to see the band of men on the knoll swoop to the rescue and redeem the day, but they never budged. And then, glancing away across the field, I saw that Argyll's left had been now wholly routed, and that the moor was covered with fugitives who streamed to the south and west, and were kept from rallying by the horse of Mar, who pressed them hotly.

The insurgents after all seemed to have the game in their hands, but, as I have hinted, the great Duke was a skilled soldier and an able leader. He gave the signal for his right and centre to advance, the bugles brayed, the bayonets were brought to the charge, and what remained of the Royalist army rushed upon the disordered Highlanders. In a moment the latter were in flight, throwing away their targes and aught that might impede them, and though they strove hard to offer a resistance now and again, every attempt was cut short by withering volleys, while the dragoons broke them up and dispersed them or rode them down.

The whole scene was now strange to a degree, both armies being partly defeated and partly victorious, but it seemed to me that if the rebels abandoned their pursuit and fell on the rear of Argyll's pursuing force nothing could save the regulars from total rout. At this critical period, however, there seemed no one to command, no one to direct. The clans had tasted of victory on the right and were resolved upon enjoying its full fruits, and so they never heeded how the fight fared elsewhere, but drove the flying soldiery before them till there were no more to slay and till the moor was cleared.

Then they coolly gathered on a hill to the south, which I know now to have been that of Kippendavie, and I fancy they must have been not a little surprised when they looked back, for beyond the wounded and the dead and the men under Rob Roy there was scarce a sign of battle where a battle had been waged. Argyll, fearing to get between two fires, had pursued with the utmost vigour, driven the rebels, though five thousand strong, down the slope, over the next rise, and away out of sight towards the Allan, and beyond a

confused sound of strife in the far distance there was nothing to tell that the combat still raged.

So ended the fight of Sheriffmuir.

As the old ballad has it—

“ There’s some say that we wan,
 Some say that they wan,
 Some say that nane wan at a’, man ;
 But o’ ae thing I’m sure
 That at Shirramuir
 A battle there was that I saw, man ;
 And we ran and they ran,
 And they ran and we ran,
 And we ran and they ran awa’, man.

If the contest and my position had both been curious, the latter was now more curious than ever. I had been promised liberty in case of success, death in case of failure, but there had been no word as to what would become of me if the battle should be drawn. Indeed such a possibility, as was very natural, had entered neither the Earl’s head nor mine. And yet the fates had decreed that the action should prove indecisive, and my fate as a result was left unsettled. Still, as I reasoned, this was better than the certainty of being hung as a spy as soon as Mar got hold of me again. I stated my case to my guards, but got little sympathy from them. Their feelings were a trifle mixed, and they were so busy discussing the situation and arguing upon it that they had no time to listen to my fears and complainings, while they greeted with ridicule my proposal that I should be set free and left to my own devices. One of them was of opinion that the advantage lay with the rebel army, as some of them still occupied the field ; but the other vowed that such was not the case and wanted to be off, as he deemed it likely Argyll would return and make short work of the force upon the hill of Kippendavie. In the end they resolved that one should remain to keep an eye on me, while the other rode towards the place where the combatants had last been visible, to see what had best be done, and if the way was clear to follow the main portion of the insurgents. I watched him catch his horse, which had been hobbled near at hand and allowed to pluck the grass, while his companion lit a pipe and examined the

door of the hut to see if it was securely fastened. How very true it is that in seeking to avoid one danger we oft run straight into another. The fellow whose fears had sent him away rode over the field, no doubt out of curiosity, for he might have skirted it, but he had not got very far when we saw a figure start up and fire a pistol at him. Ere the report reached us a terrified horse with an empty saddle was careering madly towards Dunblane and the war had claimed another victim. The man who remained took his comrade's fall with great good humour, being apparently pleased at his own wisdom in staying behind, and sat upon a stone and smoked at his pipe very contentedly. He was a big coarse trooper with a spotted face, and after a time, finding the minutes drag wearily, hit upon the brilliant plan of throwing pebbles and pieces of lime at me from a distance, so that I was speedily forced to withdraw from what out of courtesy might be called a window. I foolishly gave him a piece of my mind, and he straightway replied by blocking up the opening with a large stone and tufts of grass till he effectually prevented my outlook.

The place was bare, and there was now nothing for me to do but go striding to and fro so that my blood might circulate readily and keep me warm. I had scarce felt the cold in my excitement, but now it forced its attentions upon me till I fell to blowing on my finger-tips and rubbing at my ears. Gradually it grew dark as the short afternoon drew to a close and the baffled sun withdrew his kindly light and let the upland mists and cloud banks have their way. I was left to my own reflections, which were not pleasant, and to a sense of hunger, which was still less so. My thoughts went drifting back, and I remembered the grim, dead face of the murdered man, and pondered on the mystery, and almost feared to see it appear in the gloomy corners of the hut. I made a survey of the walls and picked at the mortar, but there was no way of getting out. I pulled some of the grass tufts inside, but could only get a view of a wintry sky, and could not shift the big stone. I heard nothing of the trooper who had played such a sorry jest on me, and all that came to my ears was a faint cry now and then, a wail perchance of some stricken wretch on whose gaping wounds the biting frost had fastened, and once, as it seemed, the

sound of horse hoofs in the far distance and a confused shouting.

I called upon my guard but got no answer, and I began to be seriously alarmed. I had good cause to be so had I known all, for Argyll returned from the pursuit, took possession of the cannon and standards which had been left behind, and menaced the rebels who had gathered on Kippendavie. Both eventually drew off, however, having had enough of bloodshed, and though I knew it not, so did my guard, who at first sight of the enemy had stolen quietly away, leaving me to my fate, without food or water on a bitter winter's night, a fast prisoner in a lonely shepherd's hut upon the mountainside.

CHAPTER XX

A RESCUE AND THE CHEVALIER

IT grew darker and yet darker, and the cold increased. I began to have an inkling of the truth, and made desperate efforts to burst the door, but it was stout and held firm. The hut must have been occupied as a dwelling at one time, for it was very solidly put together and the roof was strong and compact, for at times the snow must fall heavily in these bleak regions. There was a dead silence now, and I began to have unpleasant pictures of some wandering shepherd finding a starved skeleton stretched upon the floor, a frame of big bones loosely covered by a wasted skin, a face with sunken cheeks and of gaunt aspect, whose story he would never know. I had no knife, and, as I have said, the place was absolutely bare and the floor was of hard-beaten earth. I crouched miserably by one of the walls, and then took myself to task for a faint-hearted mortal, and occupied myself shouting loudly and stamping with my feet.

Again and again I made a circuit of the hut, but no prison dungeon could have been more secure; the cells of the Tolbooth were nothing to it. I cursed the careful labour which had erected such a dwelling in such a place. I whistled, but it was a very melancholy piping; I started a song, but it came to be a harsh and miserable droning by the second verse. I even got the length of trying to make myself believe that the whole thing was unreal, and I would walk hopefully to the door and drag at it, but this amusement proved very feeble and was not long sustained. It struck me that there must be much of interest to a man of my profession out upon the moor. I was losing an excellent chance of studying incisions, contusions, gunshots, fractures, and the commencement of gangrenes and inflammations.

I will do myself the credit of saying that I felt a great

pity for the unhappy wounded lying in agony under the icy breath of night. I was sound and in fair health, yet I suffered severely. What, then, must it be for the crippled, the shattered, and the dying? I vowed to myself that could I get clear I would do my best for them. It was an easy vow, for there seemed no chance of its being fulfilled for many a long hour, if at all. The battle had been drawn, and it seemed as if my punishment was to be drawn out to a length the thought of which filled me with forebodings, while it looked as though it would have one certain ending. I put away these cheerless imaginings.

"Come, come, Allan," I said sharply to myself, "this is an experience, as old Adam would have put it, and he will relish the account in days to come," but somehow there crept into my mind the conviction that the recounting would take place in another world, if the tale were ever told.

I reasoned with myself to prove that I might make some signal by the window chinks in the morning when folk would certainly be stirring on the battleground, and this brought me some comfort. The hours passed very slowly, and from my tiny loophole I made out that the sky was now clear and star-set, and once I heard a hoarse croaking almost like a dog's bark.

"Whatever happens," said I to myself, "thank God I am safe from that."

Shortly afterwards there came a wild scream, a shrill call of pain and terror, which soldiers and the prowlers on a stricken field know. It was the sound a charger makes when a powerful beak is dabbed into his eye, a sound which might come from the throat of fiends, so weird and appalling is it. I heard it more than once that night, and it made me shiver even as the cold had not done.

At last I sank into a sort of sleep or stupor, and it was very early on the morning following that I was wakened by the noise of something moving outside the hut. I raised myself on my elbow and listened intently.

I fancied there were voices speaking in low tones, and I was about to utter a yell of welcome when I became convinced I was dreaming or had turned mad, for I clearly made out that one of the voices was that of Dorothy Wayward.

I rubbed my eyes, I sat upright. I was certainly not asleep, and yet the voice continued in a low whisper.

I had a clear recollection of all that had passed, I knew where I was. Assuredly I had not gone mad.

And then the door was shaken violently.

"Allan, are you within?"

There could be no mistaking that whisper, and I sprang to the blocked-up window, stumbling as I did so, for my feet were numbed and void of sensation.

"Is it you?" I cried, a very foolish question when you come to think upon it.

I was answered by a little burst of rippling laughter, in which, however, I thought I could detect something like a sob of relief.

"Ay, ay," replied another and totally different voice, "it's just me and your lass. Bide a wee, and we'll hae ye oot."

I was now still more surprised, for it was a woman who had spoken. I well-nigh gave a whoop of delight, but restrained myself in time, remembering my proper relations with Dorothy and the bearing I had assumed when last I had met her. I wondered dully how on earth she, of all persons, had come to my aid. I was soon to know, however, for after a few grumblings at "the teuchness o' the knots," I heard the rip of a knife-blade on the rope strands, the latch was raised, the door pushed inwards, and I was free.

I came tottering out with curious, flopping steps, such as men have in a strange disease, of which they die, and found two figures, each wrapped in an ample cloak and having hoods drawn over their heads.

"Dorothy!" I cried, in a husky voice.

One of the figures stood still, the other vanished round the side of the hut.

"You must go away, Allan," said the former, speaking very quickly. "You see the Duke will be here in a few hours, and my father is with the army; so you see"—

"I see that I owe you my life," said I very gravely, finding no sign of the trooper or his horse, "and I will not go a step till I hear how you came to be here."

"Jean!" she cried.

The figure which had disappeared so abruptly came into

view at once, throwing back her hood, and I saw she was a comely, strapping lass with a countenance which is best described by the words *douce* and *sonsy*.

"Here is your real saviour," said Dorothy; "I could have done nothing without her."

"And that's the truth," answered the country girl; "but dinna ye think ony the less o' your sweetheart for that."

"Hush!" said Dorothy; "what did I tell you, Jean?"

"Aweel, dinna fash yersel'," replied this outspoken damsel, "ye nicht dae waur than hae him for a lad from a' that Roger telt me; forbye, he's a braw, buirdly chiel, and gin he's no your lad, your his lass, as ony fule nicht ken. Look at the glint in his een, mistress," and she threw the light of a lantern on my face with a roguish laugh.

"Confound the woman!" thought I, and yet was not altogether ill pleased. I would have given a good deal to have known Dorothy's thoughts at that moment, but she merely drew the hood closer about her face, while I muttered something and stepped aside.

"You see, Jean here is betrothed to a sergeant who was in charge of you," she said hurriedly.

"And foond ye a gey teuch handful," said Jean.

"He had the bad luck to be wounded and captured," continued Dorothy, "and from him we learned what had become of you."

"Ay," broke in Jean; "but deil a step wad I hae gone for ye, but for what she did."

"Will you be quiet?"

"Gang on, gang on; but it's no harm lettin' him ken, puir lad, that ye did me a service, English though ye be."

"As I was saying," Dorothy went on, paying no heed to her garrulous helpmate, "we found from the sergeant you had been shut up here before the battle, and this good girl offered to guide me to the place, and had a plan to make your guards drunk, while she has also a pistol, which is very wicked, is it not? But happily there were no guards, and we managed finely, for girls, of course."

She was plainly the same quick-tongued lass who had delighted to have a hit at me at Erkinholme.

"It was she that helpit me to get Roger frae the sodgers."

"Bless me," said I, "so it's a case of tit for tat," and

wondered at the romance in the grim old Cameronian's life, even though Mistress Jean looked nearer thirty than twenty.

"That's so," said she, "but I'll jist bide roond the corner till — ye ken," she gave a wise nod and made off.

"Jean!" cried Dorothy.

"Stay," said I, "you will not grudge me a minute; I will do you no harm," I continued bitterly. "But pray tell me how you happened to be at Dunblane."

"It seems my father was afraid of these huge men who obey you, and besides, he wished to get early news of the battle, and so we rode for Stirling the night you were taken."

"I begin to understand," said I; and indeed the thing was very natural. Silas Solid, for so I must call him, having failed in his attempts to gain the ring and show his worth to the men he served, and recognising that his life would not be worth much when the Campbells returned and found me gone, had deemed it prudent to clear out of Edinburgh. No doubt he was anxious to be the first to report a victory or a defeat, and had thus hurried to the scene of action.

For the second time he had done me a good turn without knowing or meaning it.

"And yet," I continued, "I cannot conceive why you should have done this for me. You have run great danger, for you might have met fugitives or wounded men, and it was madness to think of overpowering the guards."

"So Roger said, but I had faith in Jean, who is a wonderful woman; and did you not suffer in helping me, Allan? Besides"—

"Besides what?" I asked quickly, breathing hard and stepping close to her.

"It's time we were awa'," said Jean, coming round the corner.

"Yes," said Dorothy, "it is not safe to stay longer."

"Very good," I answered quietly, though angry at the interruption, "but I am coming with you."

"There's a lad!" said Jean.

"You must not; there is no need. You must get away while there is time."

"I have said I am going to see you safe on the road to the village."

"It's a toon," said Jean sharply; "d'ye no' ken we hae a muckle kirk, forbye"—

"I crave your pardon," I answered solemnly, with a bow, and she made me a curtsy on the spot.

We set off at once, Dorothy ceasing to protest, and I became aware that she had indeed braved much in passing over Sheriffmuir, for, despite the darkness, the sights we saw might have sickened a strong man not used to violent death or the room of dissection.

She shrank near me and was very silent.

Jean seemed of sterner stuff, and was even a little curious.

"I wunner," said she, "did Roger kill mony o' them. Ye ken he's a braw mon in a fecht," she added, as if by way of apology.

I longed to speak, to warn Dorothy against her father; but I feared to look rude and spiteful, and she seemed happy enough. I longed to pour out a flood of other words which hovered on the tip of my tongue, but somehow I could not. I was not sure of myself, for great hopes had risen in me, and I feared to find they were built upon nothing, to discover they were a mere airy fabric, which would vanish at a word. Moreover, I even yet felt a trifle awkward and uncouth in Dorothy's presence. I was conscious of my size and lack of polish, and I became diffident and slow in speech. Still, I determined to say something ere we parted, for I was not the clumsy rustic I had been, and I had forgotten all about Henry Gering. We reached a path at last, and far below could see lights in the valley. What is more, there came a faint sound of men on the march.

"It's the Duke," said Jean, who had kept well in front the greater part of the way; "the sodgers are in the toon, and they were sayin' last nicht there wad be mair fechtin' the morn's morn. We maun awa', mistress."

It was indeed plain that there was danger in delay.

"Dorothy," I whispered, "you did not finish what you had to say. Besides"—I stopped and waited.

I could hear her breath come quickly, and she turned her head away.

“Besides”—I urged.

“Your mother has been a mother to me.”

I set my teeth hard, but I remembered all she had done and dared.

“Farewell, Mistress Wayward,” I said, with a tremble in my voice which I could not check, “farewell, and again I thank you.”

She gave a little cry, and then held out her hand.

This time I did not hesitate but raised it to my lips.

“Losh!” said Jean, “but that’s cauld comfort. Buss me, lad, and welcome, and mind Jean Ingram in your prayers, gin ye say ony.”

The situation was awkward, indeed painful, but I sent my remembrances to the sergeant, did as I was bidden, and even felt a trifle heartened as I turned and faced the moor.

I was alone once more, but I was free and had plenty to think about. The thing was like a miracle, though simple in the extreme. It is true I had not learned the ins and outs of the story, and fancied they must have had some difficulty in gaining the sergeant’s help, but its main outline was sufficient for me, who had been thinking of very different matters when I might have had the tale in full.

For a moment I had really believed that Dorothy had come to my rescue out of more than gratitude. There had been something in her voice, something in her manner, which had stirred me strangely. And even yet I was not so sure, albeit she was, as I knew, plighted to Henry Gering, and in spite of her last words. She seemed to have evaded my question. I remembered she had said I was much changed when I had seen her at the door of the house in the Grassmarket. Perchance this change had made me find favour in her eyes. A woman might alter her mind. I had heard they were fickle, “kittle cattle,” as Pittendreich called them, and I dared to hope. And then I recollected my old tutor, with his kindness, his queer, shy ways, his unselfish acts, his loveable nature. “Could I in honour press my suit, and do my best to win Dorothy from him?”

The thought tortured me, but I suddenly stopped short in my aimless wanderings. It struck me that I was a pretty fool troubling my head in this manner, for I had much

to do at the present, and the future could take care of itself.

I resolved to hide near Dunblane in spite of Silas Solid, and to see that at anyrate Dorothy came to no harm. I had no plans, but luckily the girls had brought me some food, oaten cakes and broken meat with a lump of cream cheese, and I had the flask of brandy meant for the guards, so I would do very well for a few hours. In short, I made up my mind to play with fire, but as I did so I remembered my vow.

I had taken an oath that if I got free I would help the wounded. At the time I had no hope of liberty, and it had been a kind of prayer with a promise of good deeds, but now, by a strange turn of luck, I was again my own master.

Still it was a daft thing to do. Don Quixote, that queer Knight of Spain, of whom I have since read with pleasure, never did a dafter. The way was clear to the south at present, but soon Argyll would be on the field, and I might be caught between two armies. Moreover, I recalled how the trooper had been shot down, and confessed to myself that I had undergone enough danger to last me a twelvemonth. But I have ever had a most troublesome conscience, and, as I have said more than once, I am at times dour in the extreme, and rarely say I will undertake and do not perform, and so I hurried back to the field.

After all it did not seem so risky, as one could lie hid in the heather with ease; but I forgot that if one lay concealed in safety, so might others.

The dawn was streaking the east by this time and touching the hilltops with a rosy hue, and all was bathed in an uncertain light, even though stars yet twinkled, pale and vanishing, in the vault above. In the faint morning light the moor presented a curious aspect. It was dotted over with lumps, which at a distance looked the colour of the heather clumps, but showed red when one approached closer, for this was the place where the clans had broken the regulars. Here and there an arm stuck straight up into the air, and once I came upon a man whose gaitered legs gave signal of his presence, for he was upside down in a sort of pit amongst the heath, and had been frozen stiff and hard. I had seen no wounded before, for which I had been thank-

ful, and now I found them conspicuous by their absence. Either the black frost had done its work or Argyll's troops had carried them off on their return. Most of the men had been slain with the claymore, some split from skullcap to chin, others run through, their red coats splashed with a darker crimson, a crimson which had turned to black where it lay thickly on the cloth.

I discovered one of Mar's cannon, which had lost a wheel and looked very forlorn as it lay all on one side with its breech tilted up, and near it was a horse half turned on its back with its tongue sticking rigidly out from between its teeth, and a long gash on its withers. As I went farther I got amongst the fallen Highlanders, great hairy men, who had died of shot wounds, and lay in most fantastic attitudes, but smiled peaceably in their last long sleep. Still more to the east I stumbled over others whose life the bayonet had let out, and these had agony stamped upon their faces or sardonic grins, while some yet grasped their broadswords; and there were many soldiers of the King amongst them. I cannot deny but that all this was full of interest. I saw muscles from an aspect from which I had never before viewed them. I saw broken bone shafts with stained ends showing through skin and hosen. I knew exactly why this or that man had given up the ghost. I could tell what vessel had been punctured, which vital part had been torn or riddled. Again some cases puzzled me, for it seemed that very little could bring about a fatal result, while now and then I came on some grim warrior who had clearly fought on with wounds which should have killed him in a few seconds of time according to my knowledge of anatomy. At last I did come on someone with life, but it was not one of the wounded. I mounted a small knoll, and on the farther side found an old man with grey hair, wrapt about in his plaid and his head sunk upon his breast. He was sitting on a heather tuft, and at his feet lay the body of a young and handsome soldier, whose dress told he was of high rank. I uncovered at the sight, and gently approached the aged Highlander. He paid no heed to my presence till I touched him on the shoulder. Then he started up and looked wildly at me.

"I am a surgeon," said I, "and alone." It was not strict

truth perchance, but served my purpose, and I could not introduce myself as an anatomist.

He did not reply, and merely shook his head when I offered him some food, though he took a pull at the brandy flask.

"Who is he you watch?" I asked curiously, for such devotion must have been well merited.

"He was a man yesterday," he said mournfully, and turned to his sad vigil again.

I went my way pondering over this striking answer, after I had warned the old warrior, who was blue with the cold, that Argyll was approaching, and I have since heard that he was guarding the body of his young and gallant master, the Earl of Strathmore, and that he gave the same strange reply to the Royal troops when they came upon him.

I did not get much farther, for in a hollow twenty yards away I came plump on three clansmen, who promptly pounced upon me, and, despite my assurances to the contrary, insisted apparently on looking upon me as an enemy, half squeezed the breath out of my body, and fastened my wrists together with a leathern strap. They had scarce a word of English, and were scouts watching to see if the army of the government would return, and they passed the time feasting pleasantly on my provender till the vanguard hove in sight, when they scuttled away like rabbits, and kept proggng with their daggers to make me hurry, while I cursed my stupidity; but one of my chief faults has ever been over-confidence, though I have been punished for it again and again.

Mar went south no more. I was brought before him at a place called Auchterarder, and he was not a little surprised to see me. He shook his head when I told him how I had been taken, but said nothing about hanging me; only he gave me the hint that I had better make myself useful, and took my word that I would make no attempts to escape, as he had need of me at a future period.

I was not a little relieved to find him in such a gracious mood, but it appeared he had got a fixed idea in his head that the fortunes of the day rested with him, or at anyrate he pretended to think so, for he marched back to Perth in a sort of triumph, with an army which dwindled away day by day, and myself as surgeon in ordinary.

By this time, what with ups and downs, I had got into a happy-go-lucky state, and though at first I was greatly worried at this alteration in my pleasant projects, I reflected that things might have been worse, and became absorbed in my work. Here at least my self-confidence helped me, for I even went the length of saving a life or two by operation, there being no one else just then to perform in my stead; one surgeon having died, and the other, a drunken Irishman, being wholly incapable. I was marvelously successful, for bold measures sometimes pay, and soon I obtained quite a name in the camp at the fair city by the side of Tay.

That dexterity with the knife which Doctor Elliot had noticed, my readings and dissections in the past, the labour and the care I had expended at the college stood my friends. My very ignorance helped me, for now I could not do some of the things I did then. I know too much.

I was not hardened by my work. It broadened my sympathies. I felt deeply for the unfortunates who had to writhe and groan as I extracted a bullet or probed a sinus, but for all that I learned the surgeon's great lesson of looking upon his patient wholly as a case for the time being. I developed faculties which previously I was unaware I possessed. I jested with readiness, I told a good tale upon occasion,—Pittendreigh's for the most part, I must confess,—I adopted a wig and an air. To my surprise I found I had an admirable manner, and I eschewed politics and strong drink. I soon made friends and earned a little money, in spite of my position as a prisoner on parole, and looking back I count that month at Perth as one of the happiest I have ever spent. The scenery was very beautiful and all was new to me. I took a part in "the roaring game," which was a great diversion of the gentlemen, and I learned to smoke without inconvenience, while I quietly studied a great deal of the life and customs about me. It needed no wise head to see that there were dissensions in the camp, and that the cause of the Stuarts was already doomed. Mar had nothing of a leader about him, beyond a ready tongue and an eloquent discourse. Half the other men of influence had no heart in the undertaking, and did not disguise their fears and lack of spirit. Many of the clans-

men came and went as they listed, and were jealous and suspicious of each other.

The true backbone of the rising lay amongst the hard-drinking, genial, ruffling lairds ; a few hot-headed enthusiasts from the glens, who had men at their beck and call ; and the devil-may-care adventurers, of whom there were plenty ; and while money lasted it was easy to maintain a following.

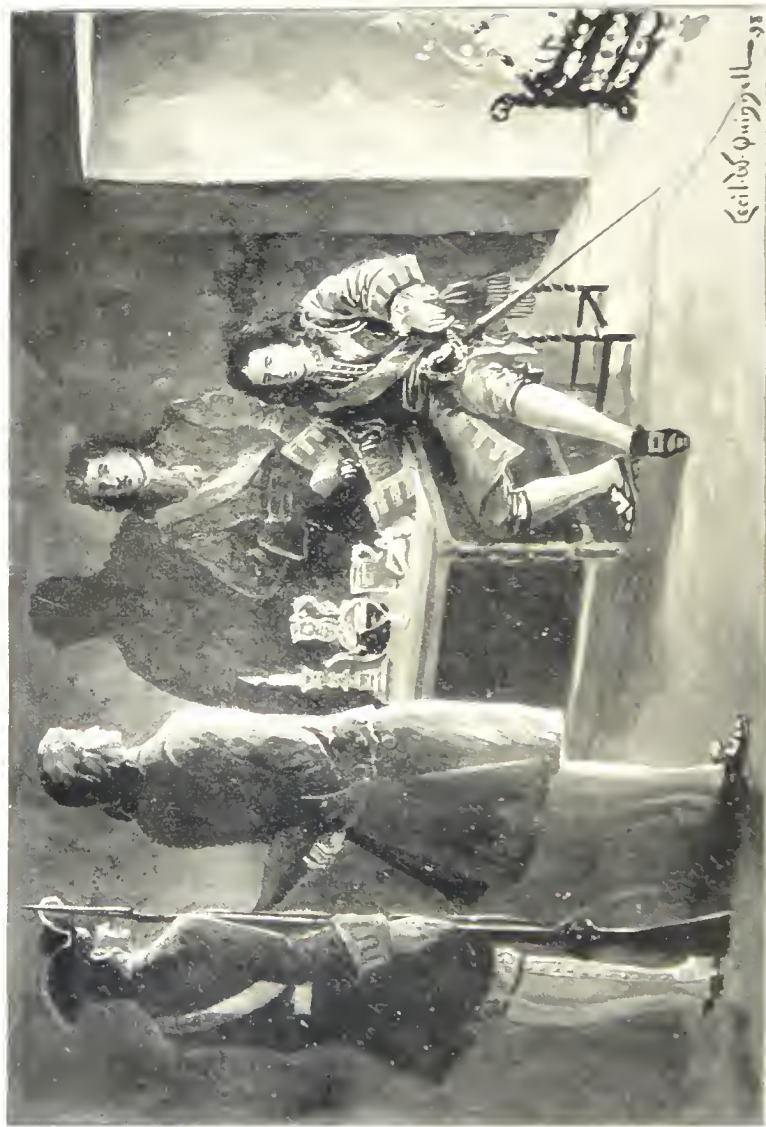
The only thing I feared was that le Fanu might turn up, for I heard enough about him to be sure he would wreak his vengeance on me if he could. There was no appearance of him, however, but a much more important personage arrived, he who was toasted as "Kit," and "the Three B's," he for whom the Earl had kept me at his side, James the Third as he was called by his adherents, the Chevalier de Saint George as he is known by the world, when he is not remembered as the O'ld Pretender. I had heard he was expected, and much wine had been consumed in consequence, but no one seemed consumed with joy. Even the loyal and fiery chieftains seemed little roused by the news. There was some excitement and great conjecture. It was but too plain to an impartial observer that the would-be monarch had delayed too long, unless indeed he should prove a man amongst men, full of vigour and action and resource ; and this, from what I had heard, I very much doubted.

I was soon to see him myself, however, for I found, as I had half expected, that Mar had detained me as a witness to show how it came about that he had disobeyed commands. It was late in December, in very inclement weather, that the unfortunate Earl, with a retinue of some thirty persons of importance, and my humble self, who for the moment was of as much importance as any of them, set out to ride for the north, James having landed at Peterhead, a fishing village in the shire of Aberdeen. I was again guarded closely, and began to have uneasy fears ; for however well disposed Mar might be towards me, his master might very well signalise his arrival by having me promptly hung.

Instead he celebrated it by an attack of the ague.

We found him in miserable quarters at a place called Fetteresso, and I shall never forget my first meeting with a royal personage.

Full of doubts, I had been thrust into a cottage with a



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W. G. THIS IS THE YOUNG MARY, SAID HE

trooper in attendance, and felt very unlike the popular young sawbones who had literally carved his way into favour with the Jacobites. The homely country folk looked upon me with compassion, evidently expecting that my end was very near, and I remember that the good dame of the humble dwelling sent her little lass to me with a hot girdle scone by way of comfort. The act touched me, but it looked like an ill omen. At last I was summoned, and ushered into a room in which were two people only—the one Mar, the other James Stuart. I entered, making my reverence, as was but fitting, and mightily uneasy; but a less formidable man I never saw.

In a chair by a glowing fire of peats sat the Chevalier, black-haired, sallow-faced, and all in a sweat and a shiver. He had an air of the most depressing melancholy, and looked as though he would weep upon the slightest provocation. His spare frame was huddled up as if to gain warmth from itself, and he had a cup of mulled, steaming wine within reach of his hand. His features were handsome after a fashion, but his expression was listless and sad, and his dark eyes had a weary, worn look in them as he raised his head and looked at me. I had come in very sorry for myself, now I felt on the whole sorry for him.

“So this is the young man?” said he. “Can you give me any relief from this painful trouble which has gotten hold of me? I hear you have some knowledge of medicine.”

I was not a little surprised at this greeting, but I bowed again.

“I fear,” said I, “that I am more acquaint with the anatomy than with the ague,” for I had recognised his symptoms, “but I might venture to suggest.”

“Then do so,” he said fretfully, and was taken with a fresh fit of his complaint, which set his teeth chattering like castanets.

I deemed it advisable to make some show of knowledge on the subject before coming to any final conclusion.

“According to the London Dispensatory,” said I, with another bow, “as set forth in Doctor Lovell’s treatise, the ague may be well treated by the extract of the red poppy, a decoction of the strobiles of hops, the oil of aniseed, sulphur, salts, and vitriol.”

"*Parbleu!*" said he, raising his eyebrows, "and am I to swallow all this?"

"Nay," said I, "some of them are external applications."

"Ah!" he answered, brightening up for a moment, and even smiling a little, "we were discussing some such question with regard to yourself, young man. But come, you can direct our choice."

I recommended the taking of sulphur, which could be easily procured, in a confection with treacle, and the stimulation of the skin and expulsion of the humour by means of a warm foot-bath with mustard powder, though I did so with much hesitation.

"See to it, my lord," said he to Mar.

"And with regard to the other matter, sire?" said the latter.

"Let it rest, let it rest. It was a false hope, in any case. After all, it is part of my usual fortune," said James dolefully. "I am a very miserable man, and why should I bring sorrow to others? But keep him by our side. He may serve as a hostage, and we will see if his remedies can rid me of these vile shiverings," and he swallowed some of the wine, holding the cup in a shaking hand.

The Earl made me a sign and I backed out, bowing low, and trusting earnestly that the sulphur and the mustard would work wonders, and devoutly thankful for the easy terms vouchsafed to me. Happily my homely cures brought relief; or mayhap they merely did no harm, and Nature applied the real remedy. In any case, the Chevalier was soon fit to travel, and we were joined by some of his retinue at Montrose, though one of his ships had been lost on the voyage. Thereafter he journeyed in royal state to Perth by way of Dundee, and there was much display and little real feeling.

James himself was the gloomiest of all, the only thing which served to rouse him being the sight of a pretty face, and more than once he would have made arrangements to stay in some wretched village had his advisers permitted, having been smitten by the charms of some fair wench who had come out to see the procession. Things were no better at Perth. The clansmen were chilled by this dark, solemn, melancholy mortal who had come to lead them, or rather to mislead them, and for whom they had been willing

to lose life and lands. He was so silent, they wondered if he could speak at all, while he was of a peevish, vacillating nature, and scarce knew his own mind two weeks together.

I must needs confess, however, that the Chevalier had a certain dourness about him. Had he renounced his faith he might have gained a crown, but he was pious after a fashion of his own, a bigot if you will, but a sturdy bigot, and this is all I found to admire in him.

There is no need to tell of how he idled and frittered away time at the town he had made his capital. Who has not heard of the cowardly retreat when Argyll advanced the next month? Who does not know how the feeble, shiftless monarch,—to give him a title he never really had or, for that matter, deserved,—slipped away by sea in the dead of night, taking his leader with him?

Little did I think I was to leave Scotland about the same time, but so it came about. I had been more closely watched at Perth, and regarded more in the light of a prisoner than had previously been the case, but during the retreat my guards relaxed their vigilance, and had I not been under parole I might have taken French leave.

Instead I took leave for France.

The day following the flight of the Chevalier and the Earl of Mar there was the utmost dismay and alarm, and so fierce did the enraged Highlanders become that it was not safe in the camp. Towards evening I slipped down to the harbour at Montrose, hoping to get a passage to Leith or Berwick, and so intent was I on finding a craft that I did not notice I was being followed. Suddenly, however, a hood was drawn over my head, a violent blow was dealt me on the skull, and I fell to the ground half stunned.

“Spit me, my young bantam,” said a voice in my ear, “if we shall not be quits at last,” and I was bundled into a boat on the river and rowed to a vessel at anchor in the stream.

As I was hoisted aboard and taken below I could have wept. But a week before I had written home in a hopeful strain, that very day I had thought myself free at last, and now I found myself in the power of a man who had good cause to hate me, for had I not at one blow ruined for ever the beauty of Captain le Fanu?

CHAPTER XXI

THE NAMELESS PRISON OF PARIS

THERE was in Paris, in the early part of the year 1716, a place which was a blot upon civilisation, a horror, a crying shame. The knowledge of its existence was confined to a few favoured beings, who were its patrons, a few heartless brutes, who were its managers, and a few miserable wretches, the most unhappy of mankind, who were its victims. No stranger entered it of his own free will, unless he were a new client longing for revenge, and with a heavy purse. No inmate left it as he entered. It hid many a secret, it covered many a crime. It was not easy to find, for the greater part of it was underground. It was secret, filthy, abominable, and it had no name.

On three sides of it were narrow, populous streets, on one side was the great river which sweeps through the capital of France. Where it adjoined the Seine it was in the form of a solitary cell; for the place was a prison. Had one looked closely at the walls of the quay which bounded the river, and stood as a tribute to the power and magnificence of "le grand Roi," so lately deceased, one might have discovered a stone, not far above the water level, a trifle unlike the rest. It seemed well set, it was of the same colour as its neighbours, but it was riddled with tiny holes, which gave it a spotted appearance, and, what is more, it was not a stone at all. The original block had vanished, and in its place was a cunning counterfeit in canvas, fitted to a nicety. Behind it were iron bars set in the masonry. Behind them was the foulest air—damp, earth-smelling, and destructive.

And yet men had lived in this place, for it was a favourite dungeon of what might be called the prison of private spites. Had anyone a grudge against another, an enemy,

a rival, here was a sure method of making away with him or her, provided the preliminaries were not bungled and there was sufficiency of coin.

Henri Grenouille was an obliging person, and he was master here. There are some men who live by sensation,—they must have novelty, they revel in excitement,—and Henri was one of these. He had tried love, war, intrigue, secret service, and had sucked them of their pleasures. He had been an intimate of the infamous Duc de Vendôme, and yet had not satisfied his starved soul. He had been ravaged by disease, buffeted by fortune, and in his old age, for he was old before his time, he had found a congenial task. He owned and kept a den of iniquity, and fattened in the process. He was never disturbed by the strange sounds which floated upwards to the house in the little Rue Bernard, for he went to bed sodden with drink, and at other times was too busy. He was faithful to his trust, for he enjoyed his work, which was full of variety and change.

Those who came to him in the nameless prison found that somehow it did not suit their health, and went elsewhere; but they departed in a curious manner, feet first, and weighted with lead. There could be no doubt that Henri's premises were excellently suited to his trade. His business was carried on in the night, yet he had frequent visitors by day. Coaches would have stood at his door, but that the street was narrow; for the neighbourhood knew Henri to be a lapidary, with many customers amongst the quality.

It was true he was used to cutting and polishing, but he did not cut and polish precious stones. He polished metal, steel for the most part, and sharpened it also.

Henri had servants who did his bidding, and did not answer him when he reviled them. They could not, for men without tongues cannot speak. Henri was not beautiful, but he was handsome beside his mutes, who were one and all deformed, and might have been Satan's bodyguard.

There was one feature which might have spoken well for this villainous business. Henri's "palais," as he was wont to call it, for he was not without humour, had never been known to be filled to overflowing, though it was not large; there was always room for one more. This did not seem

as though the trade could be flourishing, but it only meant that Henri was a clever manager. He knew how to prevent overcrowding, though he did not object to it at times.

In person he was not prepossessing. He was short, thick-set, with enormous shoulders and a mass of coarse hair on his head, which mingled with his ill-kept beard, and curled round the backs of his heavy-lobed ears. His face was swollen, and of the colour of capsicum pods, and his teeth were neither clean nor sound. And yet Henri had been a gentleman by birth, and even yet could assume the manners of a courtier, and make his bow, and use honeyed words. In one sense it is not that which cometh out of a man that defiles him.

Besides, Henri could not have become more defiled. He was steeped to the lips in every kind of evil, ay, plunged over head and ears. He had ceased to be a man; he was far worse than any brute beast. In short, he was Henri Grenouille, master of the nameless prison of Paris.

One of the glories of Henri's business was its uncertainty. When he woke in the evening, for he slept most of the day, he could never tell how many lodgers he might have to admit ere he could betake himself again to his black bottle. A week might pass without a new-comer, ay, even a month; but then, again, they sometimes came in batches.

He had been fairly busy of late, for winter was his most prosperous season; but he had just learned from his head man, a hunchback with one eye, that the river cell was vacant.

"Swept and garnished" were the words Henri applied to this fact; but they were words used in a certain sense only, for the cells were never cleaned. The master rarely went near his pensioners; he left that to those who had deposited them, and to his myrmidons. He merely interviewed his patrons, and saw that no base money was passed to him; for he had learned by sad experience that even wealthy people may be dishonest. It had happened sometimes that there had been a request for release on the part of some of his clients, whose hearts repented them of the evil; but such requests had a knack of coming just too late, and no one knew of the nameless prison who had not taken a hand in the traffic. It had not been long established, but already Henri was rich. He was rich, and he was feared.

What more could mortal man desire?

Henri was just thinking of having the vacant cell filled from elsewhere, when his ear caught the sound of horse hoofs in the distance. It was past midnight, but he was accustomed to hear such noises at such an hour. The Rue Bernard saw strange sights at night; but there were no dwellers in the street, which was small, and owned by the lapidary, who was known to be afraid of having folk near him, as they might be led to rob him.

"Monsieur Grenouille was a cautious man," said the neighbours, and the neighbours were right.

He now knew exactly where the horsemen were. Long practice had made him an adept at localising sounds. They were passing under the archway at the end of the street, where it opened on to a wider thoroughfare at right angles to it. He touched a handbell, which summoned the hunchback, and gave him an order. It was a direction to hold himself in readiness to receive a guest, and necessitated the presence of two of the other mutes, and a few articles which were found useful on such occasions. Ten minutes later Henri opened the door. It was one of his rules to let no one knock; he or the hunchback was always ready. He kept no one waiting, but he took good care to be armed when he acted the part of *concierge*. On this occasion he just anticipated a tall man, heavily cloaked, who stood on the step. Henri considered the step might be useful. It gave him an advantage in height which nature had denied him.

The man who confronted him was broadly, almost massively built, and though a broad-brimmed hat shaded his face there was light enough for Henri to recognise him, though he gave a chuckle as he did so. He had known this man as one of the handsomest in Paris, a swashbuckler, favoured by the ladies and envied by every *petit maître*, and now he found him grotesquely changed. His once finely-moulded nose had become flattened and coarse, and his mouth was curiously drawn to one side. He opened it to speak, and Henri gave a guffaw of rude laughter. His visitor had no front teeth, a defect which even a heavy moustache failed to hide.

"*Diable !*" he said, in a low, stern voice, speaking French

fluently, though with a foreign accent, "there is nothing to laugh at, monsieur."

"Why no, certainly not," replied Henri suavely; "but what will *les petites* say, eh, *mon capitaine*?"

"Hold your peace!" growled the other savagely, his hand straying to his sword hilt, and Monsieur Grenouille became grave at once.

"Well, well," said he, "we all have our ups and downs, and it is the fortune of war. But who is your friend to-night? Of different sex from the last, I see."

"Yes, curse him! He must be well treated, understand; the best of quarters for him, the daintiest fare. I do not mind paying heavily."

"To be sure, to be sure," chuckled the other, "he shall live like a prince and a fighting cock," and he stared past the man on the step to a man strapped and bound upon a horse's back, a man bent double with weariness, thin and pale-faced.

The man to whom he had spoken was Captain le Fanu, lately in the service of James Stuart, now in that of the devil; he at whom he now looked was Allan Oliphant, the ghost of his former self.

I made out the meaning of their converse, thanks to Dorothy's lessons; but I was too wretched to pay much attention to it, though I gathered that worse, if possible, was to befall me.

Since we had sailed from Montrose I had suffered every indignity. I had been thrust into the hold and half starved, getting nothing but biscuits alive with weevils, and brackish water. Twice I had been flogged for losing my temper, and once le Fanu had stunned me with the butt end of a pistol, when, by a desperate effort, I had driven my feet, bound as they were, against him, and knocked him over. I had suffered from the *mal de mer*, and been nibbled at by rats. We had been put ashore near Gravelines, but my condition had not improved. I was strapped firmly on a saddle horse, and kept there day and night, getting just enough food to keep me in life. It was given out that I was a dangerous maniac, who had been guilty of horrible atrocities, and the two men who rode one or either side of me had no bowels of compassion, and they implicitly obeyed the captain. I

was surprised at myself during that terrible journey. I bore it with wonderful fortitude, and the courage of a Stoic. My dourness came to my help, and I smothered down every sign of weakness, though I was like to sob with misery and pain. I vowed I would not petition for mercy, and I said never a word all the way from the coast to the capital.

I was in a new country, but I was far beyond feeling any interest in my novel surroundings. I listened dully to the jabberings in a strange tongue, I saw poplar trees for the first time, I noticed wooden shoes in common use, and the features of the landscape, but it seemed to me all a hideous nightmare. The distant domes and spires were the first I saw of the great city I had often longed to visit, but not a spark of enthusiasm possessed me. I passed through the streets, elegantly lit by lamps hung high above our heads, but I paid no heed to them. I was without spirit, I was almost without hope or desire. For the first time in my life I was wholly crushed in body and well-nigh conquered in mind. I might have been part of the weary beast which bore me, and stumbled over the rough stones of the Rue Bernard.

I was now untied and dragged to the ground, but what with cramp and stiffness could not walk, and was carried into the house, my wrists being still fastened, and handed over to the hunchback and two other misshapen creatures, whose forms I could just make out as they stood in the passage, which was dark and tortuous. I was speedily blindfolded, and borne along by them. We descended stairs, we traversed some place where the air was close and fœtid, and then I was flung down, only to be quickly raised again. I stood in an agony of uncertainty, for the near approach of what I took to be death roused me at last. My hands were freed, a rope was passed round my body, and I was suddenly shoved into space. I dangled in the air, blind and helpless, and then I felt myself slowly lowered, down and down, turning round and round like a roast when it is being basted.

I came heavily to earth at last; there was a quick jerk, the bandage was snatched from my eyes, I felt the rope trail away from me, and then I heard a faint clang of metal as I lay prone upon my face on a slimy floor.

After a moment or two of dead silence I gathered myself

together and managed to get upon my knees. I was in total darkness. I stretched out my hands; they touched nothing. I tried to get upon my feet, but, either by reason of their long confinement or from the greasiness of the foothold, my legs refused to obey, and I slipped and remained kneeling, conscious of a foul odour and the drip of water. I began to crawl about, and at last came upon a wall. I followed it round, and found I was surrounded by it. I was in a square cell, black as the river Styx, in an atmosphere cold, yet stinking, somewhere underground, in the heart of a city where I knew not a soul, in the power of a vengeful, bloodthirsty villain.

It was long before I could walk, but by degrees I regained the use of my lower limbs, and stumbled here and there in an aimless manner, muttering to myself in a vague, silly fashion; for at the time my wits were gone, my reason tottering.

I had scarce slept for a week, and had I remained awake that night I am certain that morning would have found me the raging maniac I had been painted, or a gibbering, slaving fool. I was mercifully preserved from such a fate, and, crouching in an angle formed by two of the walls, I passed into a heavy, dreamless slumber.

I was wakened by something striking me on the face, and opening my eyes, realised where I was. It was no longer dark. The place was pervaded by a faint, gloomy light, and I found a piece of hard, crusted, black bread lying beside me. This was what had roused me, but whence had it come? There was no door to the dungeon, the walls were covered with a green slime, and all save one reached unbroken to the roof. That one had an opening in it, of fair size, heavily grated, and was the source of light. The food had not entered by it, however, but had come from above. Looking up I saw a circular hole in the centre of the roof, and as I gazed at it a pitcher came swinging down towards me, fastened to a double cord. It settled on the slime; one end of the cord was dropped into the cell, and the whole dragged through the handle of the vessel and upwards out of sight. As I staggered towards the pitcher I saw a heavy grating lowered, which fitted the aperture, and again I heard the clang of metal, as I had

heard it some hours before. The nature of my prison was plain to me, but I had thoughts only for the contents of the earthenware. I was parched with thirst, my throat feeling like dry, rough leather, and my tongue like a shoe tag. I slipped just as I reached it, and striking against it, capsized it on the floor. I had righted it in a moment, but some of the precious liquid had been lost, and there were only a few mouthfuls left. With a trembling hand I carried the vessel to my mouth and gulped at the water. It was of unpleasant taste, but was cold, and I let it trickle slowly down my throat, making the most of every drop, as I have seen a drunken sot swallow his well-loved ale. Even as I drank I remembered that I knew not when another supply would be forthcoming, and I forced myself to stop, though I had merely changed the dryness to a soft stickiness, the leathery feel to a sensation as if my mouth was coated with fluid gum. I got back to my corner, carrying the water with me, and ate a portion of the hard, sour bread. One side of it was dirty and repellent.

My meal was finished, and, meagre as it had been, it did me good. The very change was welcome in a way. It was a relief to walk, to stretch myself, to throw my arms about, to finger my clothes, to scratch my head, to do anything which had something of freedom about it.

And yet in some ways I was in a worse position. I had at least breathed pure country air during my ride, and though I had not cared for it, there had been variety of scene. Now I drew into my lungs a chill, damp, poisonous atmosphere, a sort of heavy, fœtid mist, and for view I had four walls, two gratings, green slime, and a filth-coated floor. Truly it was a cheerful prospect. The walls were damp, and so in places was the roof. I noticed where the water dripped in steady drops. I listened, but the place was silent as the grave. I made a close survey of my new abode, but all I found was the openings of two pipes or runnels at the base of the wall with the window in it. They were small and choked with the muck. The grated opening was far out of reach. I scraped the dirt with my feet into a mound below it, and stood upon this, but I could not touch the ledge. Indeed I was little helped by this device, as the stuff was too fluid and I sank into it up

to the ankles. Everything I possessed except my clothes had been taken from me on board the ship. It seemed hopeless to make any effort to escape. I stood and drew long breaths, clenching and unclenching my hands, and staring vacantly about me.

"What had I done," I demanded, "to be thus treated? It was not fair, it was not right."

I spoke aloud rapidly, and to no one, unless to my Maker. I could not understand how such a thing could be permitted. I asked myself if it was true, if it was not a jest. "Surely I was not Allan Oliphant of Erkinholme, student of medicine? How could I be the man who had been surgeon to an army, who had treated one whom some called King? What about Pittendreigh, and Callender, and Dorothy? It was impossible that I should be immured in this hole, in a foreign city!"

I said all this on one side of the cell and repeated it on the other. I struck myself blows upon the thighs and chest, I pinched my arms, I looked at my feet, I bit my fingers.

I quickly worked myself into a frenzy, and began rushing about, falling and picking myself up, leaping for the window, running round and round the walls, doubling and dodging like a hare, till I knocked over the water vessel and came to my senses.

I sank exhausted in my corner and covered my eyes. My clothes were mired, I was a loathsome being, I was doomed. I gave one or two choking gasps, a deep sob burst from me, and then, turning on my face, I hid my tears and my grief and wept till I fell asleep.

I woke for the second time, and it was night. My face felt grimy and sticky, and I sat up, half ashamed of my weakness. At that moment I became aware I was not alone. Something was moving in the cell, and I held my breath and listened. Suddenly I felt a sharp pain in the calf of my leg. I gave a cry and reached down to the place. With a rush some animals darted away, one running across my thighs, and I knew that the dungeon was rat haunted. On board the ship I had experienced the attentions of these rodents, and had conceived a lively disgust for them. No doubt the uneaten portion of bread

had attracted them. I groped for it and threw it from me, and in a short time heard them squealing and fighting over it. They were evidently fierce, they might be numerous enough to be formidable, and a score of hungry rats might easily overcome a man weakened by privation and sufferings. I shuddered at the thought of being gnawed by these nocturnal visitors whenever I should fall asleep. I pictured to myself how they would swarm upon me when I became too feeble to resist their onslaughts. I imagined how their long whiskers would brush against my face, and their cold, bare tails trail about my neck. I have always had a power of calling up visions clearly before my mind's eye, and it is not an unmixed blessing. Just then it was a curse. It seemed probable that I would drive myself into childish despair again, but with an effort I mastered myself.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," I muttered. I resolved I would brave the worst and play a man's part. After all, men and women had undergone more terrible fates than that which overshadowed me, and had shown courage and heroism to the last. I determined to do likewise if need be, though I was troubled to think that none should hear of how I had mouldered away my strength and life underground. My mother would mourn for me hopelessly, my brother be inconsolable for a time. That strange man, my father, would be stern, and consider I had been rightly dealt with in thus vanishing for ever, but I fancied that in his heart there would be a wound.

And what of old Adam? For all I knew he might have preceded me to another world; he might have had the unenviable experience of a lopped-off head or a compressed windpipe. I smiled sadly as I recalled the sprightly, aged rascal. And Dorothy, would she miss me, or did she feel she had paid her debt of gratitude to the family of Oliphant and was free to forget me? After all, it did not matter much, for it was a far cry to Scotland from this filthy prison-house.

I had almost forgotten it as I dwelt on the past; for memory may be a blessed thing as well as a torture, it may be a salve as well as a probe.

Pleasanter pictures rose before me. I saw again the struggle on the lonely moor and my last prison, a heaven compared with the spot which now held me. My thoughts

went back to the days I had spent in the town under the shadow of the hill of Kinnoul, to the warlike clansmen in faded tartan, to the wounded who hailed me as a friend, to the suppers at which I had been present. I recalled a favourite song a laird from Fife was wont to sing, and which, despite the reverse at Dunblane, — for reverse it was, — met with general approval. It was not much of a ditty, but it had a catching air, and had been bawled out to the tune of chinking glasses and stamping feet.

Presently I found myself humming it, voicing words which had as much bearing on my present situation as Pittendreigh's converse had been wont to have on the question at issue.

What had I to do with the following sentiments?—

“Doon wi' the drap,
For gude's the tap
And better is the toast, sir;
For I'm gey sure
It can't be puir
When it is tae oor host, sir.

“And gin ye speer
What brings him here,—
For he is comin' soon, sir,—
Bend doon your ear:
It wad appear
He comes to win his croon, sir.

“Noo, braw lads all,
The trundlin' ball
O' fortune's at your feet, sirs;
At oor King's call
The Whigs maun fall,
We'll up and gar them greet, sirs.”

It scared the rats at anyrate, though not the Hanoverian rats, to whom it bore reference, and it helped me to forget the dampness and the slime and the dreary drip, in a vision of stout fellows in faded colours, ruddy wine in sparkling crystal, jovial sounds in some mean dwelling, and a forced gaiety in time of uncertainty and near-hovering ruin, and perchance it served a better purpose than its writer had intended.

It was written by a Tory; it cheered a Whig. It was meant to stimulate and inspire the Jacobites; it helped to deaden the sensibilities of an adherent of the house of Hanover.

CHAPTER XXII

THE NIGHT OF THE DOUBLE DANGER

IT would be but a weariness to tell of how I lingered on in my disgusting quarters. Looking back now upon these days I cannot believe in their reality. They seem a horrid dream of monotonous misery, of hunger, thirst, foul air, and filth by day, and of rats and sleeplessness by night. Only two events served to break the sameness—the one periodic, the other occasional. The former were the visits paid me by le Fanu, for that arch-fiend was very constant in his kind inquiries. He made no secret of the fact that my blow had ruined his prospects in life. It seems he had won the affections of some wealthy madame, who had promised to wed him on his return from the attempt to win the throne of Britain for the Chevalier. She would have done so had he returned whole and sound, but her soul had revolted against his altered nose, disfigured mouth, and the gap in his tooth line. She had scorned the captain, and his creditors had begun to swarm about him as birds of carrion gather about a stricken beast. He told me all this, and pointed out the justness of my punishment. When I did not answer him he would pelt me from the hole in the roof with pebbles and swear at me in his altered voice, for he had not become accustomed to his new anatomy. He vowed I had made him the laughing-stock of every actress and lady of his acquaintancc, and that I would rue the day I had lifted my hand against him.

He was perfectly right. I had never ceased to regret it, but I was not going to show him what my feelings on the subject were. I let him rave and curse and threaten, but kept my mouth shut. His visits were brief, for the air he had to breathe during them was not savoury, and he had not become used to it as I had. I found out thereafter that

he was unable to procure for me the finer varieties of torture. They required extra pay, and the captain was hard put to it. Had his money been plentiful these passages concerning my early life had never been written; I would have long since mingled with the mud of the bed of the Seine. But, as the proverb says, " 'tis an ill wind blows nobody good."

The occasional event was the flooding of my cell.

I had very soon become convinced that there was water beyond the wall with the grated window. I had heard it gurgle and lap in the runnels, and once or twice rats, dripping wet, had come into my abode by day. It was borne in upon me that in all probability the river coursed past this part of the prison, but it never occurred to me that it might prove a source of discomfort or danger.

I had found that I was gifted with a fine constitution, for I kept in wonderful health; but I was soon to have my strength taxed to the uttermost. It was some ten days after I had first made acquaintance with Henri Grenouille's premises that, as I was listlessly gnawing at my morning's allowance of rye bread,—I was fed, save the mark! twice in the day,—I noticed a steady trickle of water coming from the ends of the two pipes in the outer wall. At first I merely watched it bubbling out, filtering through the mire, and stirring up the slush. But as it spread into a pool I began to grow alarmed. It was gushing freely into my cell, and there was no sign of it stopping within ten minutes. At once I comprehended the meaning of the green slime on the walls, and the dampness, and the dripping wet. When the river rose the water entered my dungeon and rose also. The matter was serious.

I tried to stop up the openings with the muck from the floor, but the rush was too great. I looked round for something to serve as a plug, but the place was absolutely bare, and I could not break the pitcher which, as on the first day, came swinging down to me, and which I returned when empty, often after it had been empty for a couple of days. I had longed for more water, but now I was getting water with a vengeance. I had longed for a bath, and it looked as though my wish was to be gratified, and in a very liberal manner.

I took off my shoes and managed to dam back the flow to some extent with them, and with pieces of cloth torn

from the skirts of my coat, but I could not check it altogether, and every now and then the force of the water behind expelled my poor makeshifts. Moreover, the river began to find its way in through cracks and crannies in the wall, and seemed even to rise through the floor. As far as I could tell it had been late in the afternoon when this interesting process commenced, and by the time I could not see my hands I was nearly up to the waist in the bitter cold water, chilled, no doubt, by winter snows, for it was early in March. Up and up crept this icy embrace, as I stood motionless, resolved at last to let myself drown and be done with it; but the love of life was too strong for me. I was young, and youth is hopeful; I was strong, and strength dies hard; and so somewhere about midnight I began to swim.

It could scarce be called swimming; it was an aimless ploutring, with attempts to cling to walls which gave no support, and it could not have lasted long. The water numbed me, took my breath from me, and my clothes were quickly sodden, and grew heavy as lead. The exercise alone kept heat in me, and prevented me cramping and going down to the slimy floor from which I had been floated. I had almost abandoned the struggle, when I struck against something floating. I seized upon it, and it proved to be a plank, a thick, flat piece of wood, which had been loosened by the inrush from its bed below the mire. I threw my arms across it and clung to it. The worst was over. The river ceased to rise, and slowly the waters subsided, stranding me at last, more dead than alive, upon the soaking floor, with the sediment which had settled.

Daylight had come ere I reached this happy termination, but for long I lay with my head pillowed on the plank, a log upon a log, as one might say. Afterwards I stripped, wrung out my clothes, and got into them again. Is it any wonder the rheumatism has fastened upon me in my later life? And now I had enough of variation. On several occasions the same thing happened, though, luckily, never to such a degree, and once I was wakened by the water creeping about me. The plank proved a comfort. Although it sank in the ooze, it afforded me some sort of resting-place. I did not altogether object to a partial

flooding. It cleaned the place a little, and I have even washed in it when it rose no higher than my knees; though Seine water is scarce fitted for purposes of the toilet, and if it cleanses the epidermis, it leaves it a goose-skin when used in the winter months.

I think le Fanu marvelled at my toughness.

"Will not the villain die?" he bellowed at me more than once; for he usually came to visit me in a state of semi-drunkenness, and once he all but came plump through the hole. In his eagerness to reach me with one of his pebbles, he craned downwards, and lost his balance. For the moment I felt like one of those lions in Scripture who rent the wretches in Daniel's den ere ever they had reached the foot. I stood and waited for him, and he saw me as he hung, struggling frantically. My face must have told him what fate awaited him if he fell, for terror was depicted on his, and when he managed to raise and withdraw himself, he hurriedly lowered the grating, and I saw no more of him for two days. I was indeed fast becoming the beast I resembled at that time.

I was losing the dignity of manhood; I was ravenous. My memory was slipping from me; a stubbly beard covered my chin, my neglected nails grew long, and my hair reached far down my back. I began to acquire a stoop, and my very voice grew animal-like, harsh and raucous.

In some ways this condition benefited me. I ceased to care or worry. I existed, that was all, and recognised le Fanu as my tamer, a master I longed to tear in pieces.

Even yet it appals me to think of what I might have become, of how I might have grown prematurely old, an aged animal with the form of a man, a human being with the instincts and desires of a brute.

But it was not to be. At the moment of my greatest peril I was saved, and saved, as I now like to think, by my own exertions.

No doubt 'tis true that Providence ordained my delivery; no doubt 'tis true that in a way I owe my life to the river Seine, which so nearly flowed over me; but yet without boast I can say that I wrought my own deliverance. It is no boast, for what will a man not do for his life? He shows true courage in saving the lives of others at risk of losing his own.

My last day in Henri Grenouille's domains was signalised by the appearance of the captain in a state of ferocity. He was mad with liquor, his cheeks flaming, his eyes afire, his dress, or as much of it as I could see, disordered. He had probably met with some insult or affront which had sent him to his cups, and his heated brain had suggested his victim as fair sport. He came as it was growing dusk, and I fancied from his manner that there was something beyond his drunkenness exciting him. A kind of furious joy possessed him, there was an exultant tone in his voice; he clearly expected to enjoy himself immensely, and ere long I discovered the cause of his exuberance.

The river was rising.

He had come to see me battle for life, and something told me that he had resolved I should make way for another unfortunate; that he was about satiated with his partial revenge, and that he had made up his mind to reap it in full. He lay down with his face at the grating and jeered at me. He recited all his woes in a hoarse, muddled voice. He even wept over his misfortunes. From that day to this I have never wholly hated le Fanu. I grant he was a cruel, vicious villain, but in a way I felt half sorry for the man, he was so very human. My blow had taken every pleasure of life from him. He had been proud of his appearance, a gay dog, a hard-living gallant, heartless, but mayhap generous after a fashion, and my fist had made an end of his enjoyments and chances of success in life, and had soured and brutalised him. I could not loathe the man as I loathed Silas Solid, who was a villain of a very different type. I would have liked to kill the captain in a fair fight had it been possible—run him through or pistolled him; for Doctor Solid, hanging I felt would be too good.

As the water rose,—it was not so cold as it had been,—le Fanu mocked me and roared with maudlin laughter. As I was floated off my feet he opened the grating, lowered a lantern into the cell, and sat and gloated over me. He flew into a rage at seeing the plank, but after a time grew silent, no doubt watching me with a senseless grin upon his visage, though I could not see it. Now and then he shouted out an encouragement to "*le gros poisson*," as he called me.

The whole scene reminded me of a boozy fellow I had

once seen intently staring into his ale mug, where a blue-bottle fly was struggling in its last agonies. I recalled a hapless mouse which I had drowned when a wee laddie at Erkinholme, and likened myself to the luckless beast, which had found support from a piece of stick.

But I was to have a worse time than the mouse.

My tormentor was gradually growing sober. He was getting into the same frame of mind as he had been in when first I fell foul of him. His voice grew clearer, and he cursed more frequently.

Meanwhile, I became aware that the river was very full. By the light of the lantern I saw that the waters had risen higher than upon the last occasion when I had found it needful to swim and float.

Hitherto I had merely clung to the plank and remained inactive, but suddenly I found I had to exert myself to the utmost, for le Fanu began firing at me with a pistol. There was a crack, and a little jet of water spurted upwards some yards away from me. I quickly kicked out, and swam into the darkest corner of the cell.

Ping, ping! the man was firing wildly, taking his chance of hitting me.

I wondered if anyone had ever undergone such an ordeal. It would have been easy enough to avoid the bullets had the man been sober, for I could see him at the hole, and he could not see me as I was outside the circle of light. His unsteady hand, his bleary eye, however, added to my danger. I could not tell which way to move, in which direction the pellet would come with an angry whirr, ending in a dull thud or a sputter. He came very near hitting me once or twice, and I kept swimming round and round the cell, often turning on my track. A quick dive saved me once, I verily believe, and I had much ado to find the plank afterwards. I let myself sink as far as possible, and my face was all in a sweat despite its wetness from the water. I had the feelings of a seal when it is hunted, the sensations of a wild duck when it is fired at; at least I fancy so, only the seal can remain long under the surface, and the duck can fly.

I could do neither.

All at once, however, an idea came to me. I found the

water had floated me up near the level of the grated window. I paddled to the spot and seized the bars. They were rough. I hoped they might be rusted. I tugged at them and found them loose.

Could I but wrench them out I might get free; the aperture looked large enough to let my wasted body pass.

I shook them desperately, and the noise revealed my position to the fiend above.

Whiz! a bullet sped past me through the window, but to my dismay I distinctly heard it strike on something beyond; there was a ripping noise. The window must be guarded!

It had always puzzled me, for it had admitted but a faint light; yet I had never been able to view it properly. Now in the darkness I could see nothing. My heart sank within me, but a fresh event roused my hopes again.

The water began to rush in by the window.

Where the water got in perchance I might get out!

I started anew and paid no heed to the pellets, which came as fast as the captain could load and fire.

I had set the plank between my knees, as I was afraid of losing it, and I had placed myself so that I might be able to put out my greatest strength. My body was bent in a semi-circle, my hands grasping the bars, my feet set against the wall below them. My long, lean arms felt as though they would tear across at the elbow joints or be wrenched from their shoulder sockets. There was a tremendous strain upon my thighs and back, but fortunately my muscles stood the test. Unhappily it looked as though the bars would do likewise. The water from without came pouring in upon me, rushing past the grating, over the ledge, and splashing down upon me. I recognised a new danger. If I did not quickly succeed in making the window passable I might be too late. The incoming stream might wash me back again and again. I was as a rule a powerful swimmer, but my strength was not what it had been, and I was becoming chilled at last. It was a marvel that le Fanu missed me, for so intent was I upon escape that I made no effort to avoid his shots. My breath came in straining gasps, no doubt the veins were standing out upon my forehead, and every sinew in my back was tense as a strung bow string. At last I felt that I was winning. One of the bars became looser and looser, and

finally, with a wrench and a heave, I had dragged it free. A moment later another, corroded and deeply rust-bitten, gave way in the centre, and I pulled out the halves. It occurred to me I might make some use of them as missiles, and steadying myself a little, I hurled one of them at the lantern. It missed, but my second attempt was more fortunate; there was a crash of broken glass, and the light went promptly out. The captain's language became of the choicest, but he was content to sit and fire at me. He seemed to have as much ammunition as would have served to defend a citadel. I tried to cheat him by giving a sudden cry of pain and making a choking noise in my throat. He ceased his fusillade for a minute or two, but he must have heard me splashing, for he began again, and at last succeeded in hitting me. A bullet grazed my shoulder, tearing the skin from off the ridge of my neck muscle, that fleshy mass we call the trapezius, from its shape. Fortunately the wound was slight, and I was too excited to feel much pain. I was striving against time; I was working in a frenzy. I swung to and fro, the bars rattled and shook, the water came and went with the heavings of my body, rippling away from me in little waves as I shot backwards, and being sucked in towards me as I gathered myself for a fresh effort. My movements were like those of sea-wrack in a swell, but the wrack is the sport of the billows, while I was the cause of all this commotion. The water was now half-way up the opening, but only two bars remained. I had torn out a couple of cross gratings and another of the uprights. I had the strength of a madman. I was like a caged wild beast fighting for liberty. I was soon submerged to the shoulders, and my feet were planted one on either side of the aperture. It was clear to me I should have to dive and swim under the surface.

Fear nerved my arms and braced me for the final struggle. My plank had floated away; I knew I would have to rely solely on myself. I swung in towards the wall. I stopped and shook at the bars. I paused, took a long breath, and hurled myself away from it. The window was cleared. Everything had yielded to that last wild effort.

I let myself be borne to the surface, and paddling gently, got back my breath. I had little to dread from the captain

now. The water was so high that it intercepted his bullets, and no doubt he feared to reach down into the darkness and discharge his weapon in such a way that it might have a full range. When I felt myself prepared I filled my lungs with air and took what is called a duck dive. Down I swam and groped about, keeping my breath in and then slowly letting it out, when my chest felt as though it would burst. To my horror I could not find the opening. Some swirl on the surface must have carried me away from the spot, and the place was dark as the grave. I rose gasping.

In my anxiety I forgot that I might have felt for the place with my feet; instead I tried to reason out my position, and dived again. Again I came upon the unbroken wall. I swam along it, a fear possessing me as I did so that I might be swimming the wrong way. But happily my fear was groundless. I found the edge of the stone just as I found I had no breath left. I rose again and steadied myself carefully over the place, as a dog does ere he dives for a stone. Then I swept my arms downwards, took a long breast stroke, let my legs float upwards, and kicked out with vigour. This time I guided myself aright. I very soon knew I was opposite the window, for there was an adverse current. I drove myself through the water, however, and entered the embrasure. I threw out my hands to grip the farther edges of the stones, but, Heaven help me, they struck against something, something which was bulged inwards towards me by the water pressure, some firm obstacle fastened closely to the surrounding blocks.

Had I been in any place where I could have done so I would have screamed with rage and despair at this discovery.

My breath was leaving me, there was a clanging within my head as though a forge hammer were beating upon an anvil inside my skull. I felt as though I should suffocate. I had fixed myself by spreading out my elbows, which pressed against the sides of the opening. I could do no more. There was not room to swim; I could not force myself against the obstruction. Suddenly my finger passed through a hole, I could feel its edges, and recognised that this screen must be of cloth or canvas. The hole no doubt had been made by le Fanu's bullet, for it was large. I could get a good hold upon the stuff.

"Now or never, Allan," was my unspoken thought.

I tore at the tough fibres; I rent them. My arms passed through. I seized upon the stone edges beyond. It was time I did so. The inrush at once grew stronger. Had I not secured myself, I should have been swept back into the cell.

I mustered all my faculties for a supreme effort. Even though the action caused an increase of my agony I paused a moment. Drowning, they say, is an easy death; but though the final act is no doubt painless, the preliminaries are a torture. The strain lessened; I got my feet set on the window-sill; I crouched a little, and pushed myself off and upwards. My feet caught. They had become entangled in the canvas. I kicked wildly; I worked madly with my arms. My skullcap seemed to be lifted off by the hair roots; a sense of terrible oppression possessed me. I wriggled to and fro like a drowning fish.

At that moment my feet were freed, and the next my senses left me.

When I opened my eyes, I became aware of something black above me, something circular and flat. I turned round to raise myself from the slime of my prison floor, so that I might inspect this strange thing which had come there in the night; but as I did so, I found to my surprise that I lay amongst very different surroundings from the filth which had formed my couch since I had entered the house in the Rue Bernard. Sheets of the finest linen rubbed against my neck and tickled the hair-growth on my chin. I was sunk amongst a luxurious softness. My head rested in the hollow of a lace-covered pillow, instead of being in contact with a hard plank. I scarce dared to breathe, lest I should find all this a dream, a vision of ease and comfort I had never known and should never know. I listened for the monotonous drip of water, but instead there came a delicious chiming of some dainty clock bell. I sniffed, but in place of the foul odours of my dungeon my nostrils were greeted by the pleasant smell of perfume.

"Was this heaven?" I wondered.

I sat up and looked about me. It was not heaven; it was a four-post bed.

What I had seen above me was the black polished wood of the crownpiece, from which hung all around me heavy

curtains of a warm, dark crimson colour. The coverlet was a patchwork in velvet, and showed a wonderful blending of rich hues. I had heard of such beds (Pittendreigh, who had something to say on every subject under the sun, had discoursed of couches and beds, tracing their history from ancient times, and making many curious remarks anent them and warming-pans), but I had never seen them. Now it seemed I was the occupant of one. How had this come about? I recalled, from what appeared to me a hundred years ago, the incidents of my wild struggle for liberty. I came to the conclusion I must have wholly escaped, and a prayer of thankfulness rose to my lips, till I remembered I did not know what this might portend. I resolved to reserve my gratitude till I saw how I really stood, or rather sat; for I was Scot enough not to be too forward. Instead I turned my attention to my present resting-place. I fingered the sheets; I examined the hangings, which were lined with velvet; I burrowed amongst the feathers. I became aware that I was clad in a night-shirt of a very proper fit and exceedingly fine, all frilled in front, and soft as satin to the touch. I put up my hand—a hand I could scarce recognise as my own, so thin and claw-like was it—to my head, in order that I might scratch it; for such an action is a wonderful help in solving a mystery. To my surprise, I found my head covered with a kind of cap. I plucked it off, and discovered it to be a warm woollen article of pointed shape, red in colour, and with a purple tassel at the end. I looked at it in much disgust. Had I become a jester or a woman? I grinned feebly at this curious headpiece, and threw it from me. In doing so I made out that I was very weak. I had felt sore and stiff on waking, now I felt strangely powerless. Still I evinced a desire to see what might be without the tapestries. I got on my hands and knees and crawled over the billowy curves of the great bed. I drew the curtains aside and looked out. I found the bed stood in a large and airy room, very high in the roof, and filled with a subdued light. The walls were decorated with tapestry of a different kind from that which adorned the bed. They had designs woven in them of various sorts, and the colours were prettily blended. There were chairs with straight carved backs of black wood

and cushioned seats, and an abundance of other furniture. The floor was polished and covered with little mats. I fancied I must be in a palace, for the place looked very magnificent to my unaccustomed eyes. I got out of bed, and found I was indeed very weak. At first my legs nearly gave way beneath me, but by degrees I managed to move about, holding on to anything which might give me support, like a child learning to walk. There was a window closed with light shutters painted a pale green, through the chinks of which the sunlight was filtering in, making lines upon the floor. I threw them back, and gave a cry of pleasure. The scene would have charmed anyone. To me, shut up as I had been for weeks in a dark and stinking hole, the outlook was beautiful indeed. The room was on the second landing, and looked out upon a garden full of trees and flowers, which sloped gently downwards to a broad river, on the other side of which were green meadows reaching away to woods and sloping uplands. Some cattle were standing knee-deep in the water close to its farther bank, and in the garden there was an abundance of pink and white blossom, while the merry twittering of birds came to my ears, the window being a little open at the top. I turned and surveyed the room again. I noticed a bureau curiously inlaid with silver, and what I know now to have been tortoise shell. Upon the top of it was a covering of silk with a fringe of gold, and on this stood a crystal candlestick and a crucifix of ebony with silver mountings. I had never conceived such comfort and elegance as I now beheld. I vaguely wondered if I were in my senses, but stood and drank in the fresh air and the sunlight in a state of quiet delight. I felt soothed and rested.

I sat carefully down upon one of the chairs, and considered what I should do next. I saw a tiny handbell on a very small table with three legs, and was thinking if it were advisable to ring it, when my ear caught the sound of soft footsteps outside the door.

I rose hurriedly and staggered back to the bed, which was so far above the floor that I had some difficulty in climbing into it. With an effort I crawled behind the curtains and covered myself with the sheets. Next moment I heard the handle turn, the door open, a little cry of astonishment, and then the hangings were parted, and a face looked in upon me.

CHAPTER XXIII

MY ADVENTURE WITH MADAME MABELLE

I WAS not in heaven, it is true, but it was a very angelic face I now saw for the first time, the face of a woman with the beauty of mature years, framed in a cloud of waving hair, which showed as fine strands of gold against the dark crimson of the bed curtains. Oval in contour, with a remarkably clear complexion and eyes of a dark hazel, long-lashed and shaded by straight eyebrows, a delicate nose, a full-lipped mouth, a firm chin, and little ears nestling closely to the sides of a shapely head—such was the face which surveyed me with an expression of surprise and quiet amusement.

I have no idea what my expression was, but it made my visitor smile, and so revealed to me two rows of an ivory whiteness, while with a quick motion she drew one half of the hangings aside. Her figure matched her face, and it is not for me to describe, while her dress also is beyond me. I only know it seemed all graceful curves and little puckerings here and there, with knots of ribbons at the shoulders and wide, hanging sleeves. She was stately as well as graceful, and there was a fine dignity about her every movement. She struck me as being like a statue, but a statue which some wizard had endowed with warm, breathing life and colour. Her age I fancied to be still on the proper side of thirty, and found thereafter I was right; but to tell the truth, just at the moment I was doing my best to hide myself, and carefully dragged the clothes up about my neck and hunched the pillow up against my back, till nothing but my head was showing. In doing so I felt my shoulder pain me sharply, and winced, while I remembered my wound. I put my hand to it, and found it was bandaged, or rather that a dressing of some sort was strapped upon it. My

visitor noticed my movement, and then spoke rapidly to me in French. I caught a word here and there, but could make nothing of the sense.

I merely bowed, by no means an easy thing to do when your knees are gathered up to your chin and you are buried in bedclothes.

She clapped her hands, and gave way to a fit of merriment.

"Pardon, monsieur," she said, laughing, "but you are too droll."

I made out so much, and mustered a reply.

"Madame," said I, "there is no offence, but I have the French tongue very little."

"Ah, *vous êtes Anglais?*"

"*Non, madame; je suis Écossais.*"

"*Écossais!*" There was a world of interest in her voice, and she opened her great eyes very wide.

"But see," she went on, "I have the English ver' well, *n'est ce pas?*"

I bowed again, and she laughed once more.

"Madame," said I, with the air I had acquired at Perth, "will you do me the favour to tell me how I came to be here?"

"*Certainement*, when you have me told how *les volets* came to be opened."

I guessed she meant the shutters.

"It was I who opened them," I answered.

She shook her head at me reprovingly, and I grew confused, like a naughty child.

"You are rash, monsieur, for you cannot yet be strong. But how you came here? The river brought you. You have seen it?"

I nodded; truly I had seen quite enough of it.

"My gardener, as you call him, found you dead."

"Dead!" I cried.

"Ah, pardon! I am stupid. Monsieur was like to dead, but happily not so; and now he will recover, *n'est ce pas?*"

"Please the Lord," said I very devoutly.

She crossed herself quickly, and no doubt she noticed my curious look.

"Monsieur, then, is a heretic?"

"No, madame," I said stoutly, "I fear you are the heretic."

"We will not quarrel," said she, "but it is ver' clear you are no Frenchman; our countrymen do never contradict a lady."

"Madame," said I, "pardon me, but I merely corrected."

"Ah, now you, you argue. I have heard you will do so. But see, you are tired and must sleep; I will send coffee. *Au revoir*, monsieur, and may you soon be recovered."

She withdrew, after favouring me with a smile and a little nod, and I stretched myself out, marvelling at this new change in my affairs, but by no means inclined to regret it. I could well understand that I might have floated down stream on my back and been stranded, but it seemed to me remarkable that strangers should have shown me such kindness. I feared I had been rude, and I remembered I had not even thanked this fair hostess of mine. I was too wearied to trouble myself much on this point, however, and scarce noticed a boy in some sort of livery who placed a cup and a china bowl of sugar on the small table beside me. At that time I had never tasted this most excellent beverage, and found it very much to my liking, and then lay back in a most contented frame of mind, and promptly departed into the sleep regions whence I had come. I did not wake till far on in the next day, and found myself strengthened and re refreshed.

I rose and discovered a suit of clothes with a fine lace cravat laid out on one of the chairs, requisites of the toilet, a pot of sweet-smelling ointment, linen rags, and strips of plaister. I hesitated to avail myself of these luxuries, but it is best to take the gifts the gods send, as the ancients had it, so I set to work to dress my shoulder, and then to dress myself. A mirror had been placed on the bureau, a fine piece of glass in a wrought silver frame, and I made haste to see what manner of being I was after all I had passed through.

I looked and could not believe my eyes. I saw the reflection of a man with a short, brown, ragged beard, a man with a pale sunken visage and eyes which seemed too large for the face in which they were set. That face was lined and furrowed as well as thin, and might have seen five-and-thirty years of life. There was an edging of grey hair upon my temples, and my neck showed the lines of every muscle and tendon, and seemed strangely long, as though it had been pulled out.

It is a very queer sensation to look at your image and not to know yourself, but I did my best to dispel this illusion by the use of the razor, though my hand trembled so much that I gashed myself in two places. My wound I found to be a trivial matter and half healed, from which I concluded some days had passed since I had broken prison and launched myself into the Seine for better or for worse.

"And very much for the better, Allan," said I to myself, as I got me into a coat with very wide lappets and skirts reaching nearly to my knee bends. It was of a fine dark blue cloth; my waistcoat was of silk, long and of a cream white, and had a device of rosebuds upon it; and my breeches were tight-fitting and of a dark plum colour. In my usual state of health I would have burst most of the seams, but now I was suited very fairly, and finished off with black stockings and a pair of bowed and buckled shoes with most inconveniently high heels. I had never worn such linen; I had never been adorned by such clothes. I was uncomfortable and pinched as to the toes, but I had begun to take very lovingly to this adventure. The change from my state of misery and suffering to this bewildering magnificence raised my spirits. There was some food upon the table and a glass of red wine. I partook of both heartily, and felt renewed in the whole man.

I surveyed myself in the mirror, and had to confess I looked very well. I had the appearance of a scholar but new recovered from a brain fever. To be sure the resemblance was somewhat spoilt by my hair, which fell well down my back, and which it took me twenty good minutes to put in order and powder to my taste. Let it not be thought I was over-anxious in this direction; I only felt that probably much depended on my manners and address, and I resolved to do my best.

I again took the view from the window. It was evident the house stood in the country, but where? The whole thing was an astonishing mystery to me, but I resolved to cease cudgelling my brains and to explore for myself.

I walked feebly to the door, and there, that nothing might be lacking in this enchantment, was a stout cane with a curious clouded stone forming its rounded top.

I rang the bell.

Within a minute the boy whom I had previously seen answered my summons.

"Pray conduct me to your mistress," said I, forgetting for the moment I was in a foreign country.

"Pardon, monsieur!"

"Ah!" said I, and framed my request in sufficiently bad French.

The rascal grinned, but the sight pleased me. A Scotch lad would have done the same in a similar case with a Frenchman, and this black-haired, dark-skinned atom had no doubt all the villainies of Jock or Tammas; for boys are much the same in every land, I verily believe—that is, if they are left to Dame Nature's upbringing.

He led the way and I stumped after him, feeling as old as I looked. We descended a stair built of wood and heavily carpeted, with a balustrade carved like the screen about an altar. We passed out into a courtyard, round which I now found the house was built, and in the centre of which was a grass plot, with what looked like small yew trees set in pots at the four corners, and a fountain splashing into a stone basin, in which swam fish of a brilliant colour. We crossed the open space, entered a passage by a door, and finally I was ushered into a room.

"Your name, monsieur?" said the boy, who had a manner I envied at the time. I hesitated, but gave him my own name, which seemed a safe enough thing to do.

"Monsieur Olifan!" he cried, in a squeaky voice.

I passed on and found myself in a very fine apartment set round with great mirrors, studded with little low seats and many things which I had never seen before. A candelabra hung from the roof; it bore half a hundred candles, and I took it to be of solid gold till I learned it was but gilded. The floor was slippery, the walls and the roof painted with pictures of flowers and fruit. I stood and stared about me.

Two persons were in the room, and rose to greet me. The reflections in the mirrors made it seem as though a bevy of women had risen at my entrance. I felt very far from being at my ease, but my fine clothes gave me confidence, and I bowed. I had studied this art under old Adam's tuition, and I could make a reverence with any man.

One of the persons was the lady I had rightly supposed to be my hostess, the other was younger, a mere girl with a very plain face. She had not a feature which could not have been criticised severely; she was small and dark, but there was an air of vivacity about her which prevented me thinking her ugly. Her plainness was indeed attractive.

It would no doubt be fitting to set down our conversation as it was spoken on my part, in a mixture of very bad French and good English, on that of the ladies in a mixture of broken English and French I was at a loss to understand; but I fear I cannot do justice to it, and so will content myself by supposing it was in the very fair French I afterwards acquired, and I will take the liberty of translating the same.

“So monsieur is himself again?” said she of the fair hair and witching figure; “let me present you to my sister, Mademoiselle Susanne Genoure. I myself am Madame Mabelle de Verney, and we are both rejoiced to find you recovered. We trust you found all you required.”

“Madame,” I answered, “I am very much beholden to you and this lady. I am a stranger and a foreigner, yet I have never experienced such kindness at the hands of anyone.”

“Ah,” she said merrily, “you have the art of paying compliments.”

“Nay, madame,” I replied, “I have the pleasure of speaking the truth.”

There was a pause, during which two pairs of bright eyes surveyed me, and I drew patterns with the stick upon the floor. I resolved, however, to take the bull by the horns.

“It is but proper,” said I, “that I should give some account of myself.”

“We await monsieur’s pleasure,” said both of them at once, but I could see they were very curious to hear my story.

I set to work, and to a chorus of surprised and delighted exclamations managed to make it clear how I had come to be drifting down the Seine. I touched but lightly on le Fanu and spoke chiefly of my escape from prison, though I was careful to make it apparent I had been imprisoned without cause. I began with my capture in



LET ME PRESENT YOU TO MY SISTERS, MADAMMOISELLE DE LAUNY AND GENOURE.

Edinburgh, and gave them to understand I was a student of medicine, though never a word of Dorothy escaped me. It was very hard at times to make my meaning clear, but they were both quick-witted and helped me when I halted for a word, and nodded, and smiled, and spoke to each other in explanation till I felt I had made a very creditable attempt and had enlisted their sympathies.

"Monsieur, then, is for the exiled king?" said madame eagerly.

I shook my head. "I am on the other side," I answered, "but I am not a soldier."

"I fancy you would have made a very good one," said mademoiselle, with a sharp jerk of her head.

I bowed again. Never had I thought an inclination of the spine could be so useful; it served me better than my French.

I thought of asking them why they had taken such an interest in a haggard, ragged waif stranded in their garden, but feared such a question might reflect on their hospitality. Instead I inquired for Monsieur de Verney, and found at once that something was wrong.

"He is not at home," said Madame Mabelle; but her eyes filled with tears and her face grew troubled and sad.

"Pardon me," I said in some confusion, "I fear I have caused you pain."

They exchanged glances but said nothing, and presently proposed to show me where I had come ashore. I assented readily, and we sallied out into the garden, where the air was sweet with the scent of early flowers, and where walks, lined by thick yew hedges, led down to where the river swept past in a mighty curve. It was not now in flood, but it was easy to see how I had been washed up, for the sloping bank was littered with what had been floating branches and drifting débris. I found the house to be the Hôtel Rossignol, situate some two miles from Paris on the left bank of the Seine. It was a wonder I had ever reached it, but the current must have been very different from the sluggish stream which now glided past us through the meadows, rush-lined and bearing not a single boat upon its bosom.

They questioned me much as to where my prison was,

for they had never heard of such a place, and I think they scarce believed me altogether; but this made no difference in their bearing towards me, which was most gracious.

I blessed the happy chance which had thrown me on their bounty, for I should have starved in the city or perchance fallen again into the hands of le Fanu. I conceived a lively admiration for Madame Mabelle, the homage a youth pays to a beautiful woman older than himself, and I was quickly on good terms with her sister. I found plenty of amusement, for all was novel, from the lacquey in dark green coat with red facings, yellow breeches, and crimson hosen, who reminded me of those birds from the Indies called parrots, to the strange dishes and dried fruits he handed me gravely, and the red and white wines he poured into my glass. I could watch the clock, the bell of which was struck by a hammer of bronze held by a man fashioned of the same metal, for an hour at a time, as it was of curious mechanism and had devices whereby little birds flew out from folding doors, and painted butterflies came forth from hidden chambers. Indeed I could write a goodly chapter on all the marvels I saw, many of which were common enough in France at the time, though unknown in my simple, homely land, where folk were content to live in a rugged comfort, and scorned, because they could not enjoy, luxurious ease. I am not minded, however, to waste ink in comparing the flavour of the wine of Surene with that of Chabri, to discourse on the relative merits of tapestry of the Savonnerie and that of the Gobelins, to picture minutely the life and customs in the Hôtel Rossignol. After all, it was not so very different from elsewhere, and I speedily became used to breaking my fast at midday, for the morning meal is a deception, and dining late in the afternoon, to hot sauces and dainty confections, to the sweet white bread for which the villages round Paris are famed, and even to the company of Madame Mabelle and Mademoiselle Susanne. I found I had a knack of picking up phrases quickly, and within a week could talk with some freedom even to the old curé, our only visitor and a very decent old man, while I readily understood much of what they said, when they spoke slowly and avoided the use of idioms, as they were at pains to do,

for they were both high bred and accustomed, as I discovered, to the best society, even the court precincts being known to them. To tell the truth, they said very little about themselves and encouraged me to talk of Scotland and of the war, and informed me of the court James had held at Saint Germain. All the time I could see that something was kept hidden. Madame Mabelle was little visible save at meals, and her gaiety at those times was forced, her eyes being often reddened at the lid edges as though she had been weeping.

I began to grow strong and uncomfortable. It was evident I could not loiter on at the hôtel, and yet I had not a sou in my pocket—in the pocket of the clothes which were not mine, for my own had vanished.

What is more, I did not see how I was to repay Madame de Verney. Her youth, her beauty, her secret trouble interested me greatly. I was still ignorant as to why these favours had been showered upon me. With better health came the very natural desire to do something to show my gratitude. My only accomplishment, however, was with the knife, and neither lady had so much as a wart which I might have removed. I could not wish them to meet with an accident or fall ill. I began to worry over my position, for what man with pride would care to find himself dependent for everything on two women scarce known to him? What is more, I never felt sure of myself in Madame Mabelle's presence. She was fit to turn any man's head, for she was a perfect picture, from the knot of golden tresses, free from any powder or perfuming, to the tiny foot in silken shoe which peeped from under the embroidered skirts of her dress. I have never seen, no, not even in Dorothy, so finely moulded an arm, so white a neck. The curves of her figure caught the eye and held it fascinated, till her smile or the far-away look in her eyes drew the gaze and kept it on her face. To be sure my feelings towards her were those of devotion and lively gratitude, nothing more, but it annoyed me to find myself listening for her step and longing to catch her voice, which seemed made to speak French; and this, if you know aught of languages, is a compliment indeed. I could not help comparing her with the English lass who had been my companion for a brief

space after my former escape from a very different prison to my last. I had honestly to own that Dorothy had not the great beauty of this Madame Mabelle, no, nor her grace and manners; but she had something the Frenchwoman lacked—a simplicity, a homeliness, ay, and a touch of petulance and a turn of wit, qualities which would have perfected Madame de Verney had she possessed them. Let me confess, however, I saw her under a load of grief and care, and so not at her best as far as the mind is concerned. Her companion seemed to me to be all sharpness and fiery energy. When she spoke she gesticulated; she was never still a moment; she ran when she might have walked, she hopped like a lively bird, she chattered like a magpie. At times I think my somewhat stolid demeanour and gravity irritated her, for, as was but natural, she could scarce see at once that under my native reserve I hid a sense of humour, and that I could appreciate a jest when it came my way.

“I do not understand you, Monsieur Olifan,” she said more than once. “I had ever heard you Scots were more like our people, and yet no one would take you for a Frenchman.”

“There are Scots and Scots, mademoiselle,” said I, not ill pleased at her remark. “The Celts of the north, I have heard, are indeed in some ways like the French; but I am from the border-land, where we are a grave, stern folk, having suffered much for our faith, and in past days from our enemies of England.”

“Ah, that terrible England!” said she, with a grimace, “I would it was put an end to. But they have beaten your countrymen again, monsieur; it is sad!”

I tried to set her right, but she would have it that we had been conquered, though brave; and it took me a whole day to explain the Treaty of Union, and how matters really stood.

As I did so I blushed for some of our nobles, for, whether for good or evil, did they not sell their land for filthy lucre?

In the long-run it was she who solved the mystery for me, and this did not come about till I had been an inmate of the hôtel for ten days and was myself again, though I had not ventured beyond its precincts.

It happened we were together in a summer-house which overlooked the river, and I remarked how strange it was I had lived, and lived to be cast ashore upon the bank.

"Yes," said she, "the good Virgin must have had you in her keeping, monsieur."

I begged to differ, but wisely held my tongue, for mademoiselle had a temper, as I knew, having caught her boxing the ears of *le garçon*, who had been up to some mischief or other.

"I would I could in some way repay madame and yourself," I answered; "but I am destitute, and"—

"You mean what you say, monsieur?" she replied, interrupting me.

"Assuredly."

"Then promise me you will say nothing to my sister of what I shall tell you. She believes her patron saint has sent you here, and it is well to let her think so; though at first I told her she was a fool."

"I am all attention," I answered, "and you have my word."

"Swear," said she, and held out a small crucifix of ivory fastened to a chain of gold which she wore about her neck.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "believe me, I am a man of honour. I am a gentleman and a Protestant, and such an oath would serve no purpose."

She looked surprised, and then laughed a little.

"You are a strange man," she said, "but I like you best when your mouth is closed as it is now and your eyes have a steely look in them. As I once said before, you would have made a soldier, monsieur."

I did not answer, for I remembered that Henry Gering had said the same, and my thoughts drifted back to the curious life I had led hitherto, a life which could scarce have been more eventful had I followed the profession of arms instead of that of medicine.

"But to return," she continued, speaking low and quickly, "you must know that madame, my sister, was but recently married to Monsieur de Verney, a gentleman of Normandy and a colonel of horse, though he is still a young man. Ah, but he is brave, yes, and handsome, and worthy of Mabelle! You have seen what she is; I know you also have fallen under her spell. Nay, you need not redden, there is no harm done; and, thank the Virgin, my sister is a woman in a thousand, otherwise she would scarce have remained as

she is; for, as no doubt you know, the court is vile and very wicked, monsieur, indeed more so than in the days of the late king. It so happened that Monsieur cast his eyes upon Mabelle."

"Monsieur?" I queried.

"Ah, pardon! you do not know him by that name. I mean the Regent, the Duke of Orleans, a terrible man and clever as Satan; and he was furious when Edouard de Verney won her for his wife, for she had spurned him and half a dozen more. Mabelle looks quiet and peace-loving, but she has spirit when roused and a temper worse than mine; but then she looks well in a rage."

She said this last in such a heartbroken tone that I felt sorry for her. Still I would not pay her an empty compliment, and I think she understood my silence, and half hated, half liked me for it. Mademoiselle was a queer mixture of warm impulses and a kind of pitiful vanity, but she was far from being feather-headed.

"Not to weary you with details, it will be sufficient for you to know that the Duke imprisoned Monsieur de Verney in the Bastille, our state prison, giving out that he had been guilty of treason in trying to bring about a war between France and England. Monsieur had given his plighted word to go with your King James, and though but newly wedded would have done so, despite an order from the Duke, in the name of the young King, prohibiting any in the public service giving aid to—how do you call them?"

"The Jacobites."

"Yes. Well, monsieur, you can see at once how this was a pretext; and since Edouard was imprisoned poor Mabelle has received letter after letter in disguised writing from the Duke, full of promises and threats. And look you, we have no brothers or male relatives to help us, while so low is the honour of France that every man of our acquaintance has his price, and it is a price we shall not pay."

I looked at her, and confessed to myself I liked her best also when she was dour and had a flash of anger in her dark eyes, but I merely muttered my sympathy, while my mind was busy.

I began to see how the land lay, as the saying is, though all was not yet explained.

It very soon was however, for mademoiselle went on to tell me that her sister, on the eve of her marriage, as was a common custom, had consulted a fortune-teller or soothsayer, and at the time had been much vexed at his sole reply to her many questions, which was "that the Seine would bring her good luck, the Garonne evil." When, however, the gardener brought information of my arrival, the unhappy young wife had been seized with a sudden hope, and it turned out I bore some resemblance to her hapless husband, which still more prejudiced her in my favour, hence my reception.

I listened with the utmost interest to this curious tale, which mademoiselle told somewhat shamefacedly at the end ; but, as she said, they were growing desperate, and madame had been eating her heart out, as I had given no sign of bringing her aid, and she was too proud to beg it of me.

I remembered now that my hostess had sometimes looked at me very wistfully, and once when I had spoken of the prisons of Paris had hung upon my every word, and I saw that I was in a somewhat delicate position.

After all I had said I could not now draw back, indeed I had no wish to do so, but I had perforce to confess that my path was again beset with danger. Here was I, but newly escaped from prison, about to mess myself up in other folk's troubles, and help an unknown foreigner to imitate my excellent example. I wondered in what extraordinary position the stars had been at the time of my birth. It was evident I had been destined to become a shuttlecock of that fickle dame La Fortune.

Mademoiselle sat silent, but watched me fixedly, and fidgeted once or twice on her seat. She was clearly full of anxiety.

"Is there any means of access to Monsieur de Verney?" I asked at length, for an idea had come into my head.

"Then you will really help us ! you mean it ?" she cried, starting from her seat.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "I am a son of John Oliphant of Erkinholme, whom you have not the pleasure of knowing, or you would not have asked that question," and I bowed to the best of my ability, for, as the worthy reader has perceived, I had in very truth become a squire of dames.

CHAPTER XXIV

MY ADVENTURE CONTINUED, AND ITS SEQUEL

IT turned out that Monsieur de Verney was permitted to receive visitors on certain days of the week, and it also appeared that the general opinion was that he would be set up in front of a firing party some fine morning or his head set beneath the knife of "the maiden," that interesting instrument, which still lingered in use, and a facsimile of which the Regent Morton introduced into Scotland, and which served the purpose of introducing *him* to another and, let us hope, a better land.

This being so there was no time to lose, and I put together a plan which struck me as ingenious and likely to succeed, though all the same it had a very large element of chance in it, which added to its charm. The more I thought upon it the more I liked it, and that afternoon at dinner I broached the subject to Madame Mabelle.

"Madame," I said in a low tone, when the room was clear and only her sister present, "I am aware that you must have thought me rude and unfeeling in showing no sign of the gratitude I feel for all your past kindnesses. I am now, thanks to you, restored to health and vigour, and it behoves me to do what I can in being of service to you."

She ceased cracking the nuts upon her plate and looked at me with great eyes full of hope, while I could see her bosom heave and her cheek grow pale.

"Monsieur de Verney, your husband, is in prison," I went on, "but I trust his stay there will be of short duration. If you will do me the honour of reposing implicit confidence in me and carrying out my directions, I have hopes that we may obtain his liberty."

Scarce had I said the words, haltingly and with many a slip of the tongue, when she was on her knees by my side.

She caught my hand and pressed it to her lips; the tears came into her eyes, but they were tears of joy.

"Heaven bless you, monsieur!" she sobbed, "may the saints reward you! Do you hear, Susanne? He will rescue Edouard. I know it, I feel it!"

"Madame, madame," said I, much put about, "spare me this; it is not fitting. Besides, remember nothing is yet accomplished. There is plenty of time for thanks, even if any were needed."

I withdrew my hand almost rudely, for I was not used to outbursts of this kind, and at that time did not understand the French nature. In reality I was a little surprised at myself. I was as unlike the Allan Oliphant of Edinburgh as in Edinburgh I had been unlike the Allan Oliphant of Erkinholme. My adventurings had done me one good turn; they had taught me to rely on myself.

"Madame," said I, when she had resumed her seat, "this is Monday. On Wednesday your husband has permission for one person to visit him. I must be that person."

"But, monsieur"—

"Mabelle," said her sister, "let Monsieur Olifan alone. He will command, and we shall obey."

"*Merci*, mademoiselle," I said. "And now I believe you have here a coach, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Very good; you shall drive in that coach to the Bastille on Wednesday, and I must ask you to favour me with a lacquey's livery and a place on the box of the coach. I must also request you to let me share my plan with mademoiselle alone, and to let yourself be guided wholly by her. Do you agree?"

Madame was too agitated to speak; she merely bowed her assent, and almost immediately left the room.

Thereafter I made mademoiselle my confidant.

"But, monsieur," she said, when I had made an end, "this cannot be."

"You think it will fail, then?"

"Not so, but what of yourself? Do you consider what you are doing, what risk you run, what"—

"Mademoiselle Susanne," I answered quietly, "may I remind you of what you said a moment since?"

"What I said, monsieur?"

"Yes," I replied; "you were good enough to say that I should command, and you would obey. It is early to break your promise."

"Monsieur," she said, with a little break in her voice, "I ask your pardon. You would not only have made a soldier, you would"—

But I heard no more, for I had departed to my room.

Two days later a coach rolled out of the gates of the Hôtel Rossignol and took the road leading to the Champs de Mar. It was drawn by four powerful horses, and was a very fine vehicle, heavily gilded, crane-necked, with very small front wheels and much glass in the fore part. Within it were seated Madame Mabelle de Verney and her sister, Mademoiselle Susanne Genoure, and I occupied an honoured position beside the coachman, an old and faithful servant of the house of de Verney. It would have been difficult to recognise in the lacquey, dressed in a livery of crimson and white, the wretched man who had entered Paris some two months previously, strapped upon a horse's back and closely guarded. Indeed, after I had adjusted my wig with the side curls, set my three-cornered hat with the lace trimming upon my head, rouged my face a little, and darkened my moustache, I had hard work to believe I was indeed myself, and found I very much resembled a portrait of the man I was going to try to liberate from the Bastille, which was then only a name to me.

I was not without some qualms as I jolted up and down on my seat. No doubt such an experience would have filled old Adam with unmixed joy, but I had scarce the sublime faith in myself that he had in his tough old frame and keen wits. Still I strove not to think about the termination of my journey, and found plenty to interest me. We were rumbling along a white, level road, and away in front I could see the city with its spires, stretched out on a plain, save where a couple of low hills lent a little variety to the prospect. We passed fields with rows of stakes set in them, white houses bowered in trees and creeping plants, women with bare heads and round, cheery faces, and once a troop of horse in a very gay uniform, every man of whom ogled the coach as he rode by and squared his shoulders. In a very

short time, having passed the Hôtel des Invalides, another relic of the great Louis, we were rumbling over the stones of the unfinished streets of the new Faubourg Saint Germain towards the Quai d'Orsai. The streets, I noted, were narrow and not over clean, while the houses were tall, but nothing like those of the Lawnmarket. Here and there in open spaces were the hôtels of the wealthy, surrounded by walls and fruit gardens, and having an air of much elegance and comfort. We continued by the riverside, and I found myself looking about me to discover if possible the position of my late dungeon, but there was no sign of it.

And now we were in a more frequented part, and I lost myself in amazement at the buildings which met my view. Here were no narrow closes and outside stairs. On the other side of the Seine I could see the palace of the Louvre, for we were making for the Pont Neuf. The aged *cocher* made himself very agreeable, though his French was somewhat beyond me. We traversed the streets of the Quartier Saint André and crossed the river by the bridge with twelve arches, which just touches the end of the Isle de Cité and has upon it the statue of Henri iv. From it I had a very fine view of both banks, lined by freestone, and of the gardens of the Tuileries, and was told the bridge itself was a dangerous place at night, being lonely and haunted by footpads. We were now in the oldest part of the town, save that built upon the island, where is the great church of Nôtre Dame, with its fine towers and hideous gargoyles; and here, indeed, the thoroughfares were narrow and crowded, so full of people that it was no easy matter to avoid running someone over, for there were no posts as in London. We crawled along but slowly, and I had plenty of time to view the citizens and the shops. Among the former was a plentiful sprinkling of abbés; clad in black, with long cloaks and powdered bobs, they were sauntering westwards and dancing attendance on ladies in gay colours, who tripped it in vast hooped petticoats, followed by servants carrying their purchases and sometimes lap dogs and even apes in little coats and silver collars. Of the latter, that is to say the shops, I noted more especially those of the apothecaries, which were indeed very fine and would have utterly put to shame poor Jamie's humble

booth had they been set down beside it. For the rest, there were hawkers and jugglers, savoyards and beggars, and gentlemen in silk and velvet taking an airing, though there were but few of these the farther we advanced. Indeed, as we left the Louvre and Saint Opportune behind, and crept along towards the quarter of the Boucheries, we saw less and less of the quality and an abundance of the lower orders.

It was all very unlike the old, narrow, grey city of the north, this dead level, the swinging lanthorns twenty feet overhead, the houses with grated lower windows, the archways, the cabarets and cook-shops, the vinegrettes plying hither and thither, and which are like sedans mounted on two thin wheels, drawn by a man and pushed by a boy or a woman. I was to come to know it well, to be acquainted with the coffee houses, to jostle in the crowd, to travel suburbwards every day of my life for a time by that very route, but this my first real experience of the greatest city in Europe is vivid in my mind to-day as I saw it from the cushioned box seat of the clumsy, gilded coach. It seemed to me a very vast place, as indeed it was, even at that period, and we traversed well-nigh its whole breadth, for the Bastille is near the eastern line of the ramparts in the Quartier Saint Paul. We came upon it at last as it was growing dusk, a dark, gloomy building with towers, more like a fortress than a prison, situate in an open space at the end of the Rue Saint Antoine.

No doubt, good reader, these names mean nothing to you, but it may come about that you visit Paris, which indeed I would advise, and in that case I shall be justified in my particulars, unless, indeed, the city changes, which may well be, for these are go-ahead days of fast coaches and rapid building, and the Lord alone knows where we shall end.

The moment we drew up I dismounted and appeared gravely at the door of the coach.

"Patrick," said mademoiselle, for it had been arranged I was to pass for an Irish servant, "you will take this to Monsieur de Verney," and she handed me a basket of flowers, contriving at the same time to press my hand ever so lightly, as a kind of silent God-speed, though since then

I have thought it may have meant something more. Howbeit, let that pass. The guard at the drawbridge must have heard her, for she spoke loudly on purpose, and I was suffered to cross the moat and even received a jocular greeting from the turnkey at the great double door, while he searched my basket, for I pretended to have got something in my eye, and held a kerchief to it, rubbing at it vigorously till it watered freely. I was committed to the charge of another man with a bunch of keys at his girdle, who led the way up a flight of stairs, and along several gloomy passages lined with low doorways. Before one of these he at last stopped, and, opening it, bade me pass on.

I entered, and a gentleman who was sitting at a small wooden table rose. As he did so I pretended to stumble on the steps and went staggering towards him, calling out gruffly, as though I were swearing, "send—jailer—message," for I had been told that Monsieur de Verney both understood and spoke English. He showed not a trace of surprise.

"Moderate your language, fellow," he said sharply in French, "what is this?"

"I have forgotten the bottle," I stammered, in the same language.

"Jacques," he cried, "this foreign ass has left a bottle of eau de vie behind him. Fetch it, like a good fellow, and there will be a crown and a drink for you."

"Anything to oblige monsieur," said the man civilly, and went off, locking the door behind him.

I waited till his footsteps had died away.

"Strip, monsieur," I said hurriedly, and began taking off my clothes.

"Who are you?" he said in surprise, commencing, however, to unbutton his coat.

"That does not matter; pray be quick. There is a coach at the door in which are your wife and mademoiselle. They have their jewels and money in a strong box. You must take my place as lacquey."

I had got a good view of him now, and found he was, as far as features and figure went, indeed like me, though I was rather the bigger. He had a pleasant face and a

dignified appearance, though just then he had a very astonished expression.

In five minutes we had changed clothes completely, and he had on my wig and hat and was holding the kerchief to his eye.

"Now," said I, "strike me on the temple hard."

"Are you mad?" he asked, "why, it is all bruised."

"All paint, you mean," I answered. "But there must be swelling, and it is easier to be struck than to drive your head against a wall. Remember your wife, monsieur."

He shook his head and I said no more, for just then I heard footsteps approaching.

"Take the basket," said I, "and be ready. Madame knows nothing of this, but mademoiselle is in the secret."

"But what of yourself?" he asked.

"Hush!" said I, "here comes the turnkey. Play your part, monsieur, and remember me to the ladies."

He was about to speak, but the key grated in the lock.

I was stretched face downwards on the pallet by this time, as though overcome with grief, and I remained motionless, though my heart was beating a tattoo against my ribs.

"Here is the bottle, monsieur; they thought they had also forgotten it, but pardon the delay."

"My master has had bad news," said de Verney, in excellently bad French and with a fine imitation of my voice; "here is the crown, and you can set the bottle down, or rather, give it me," and he brought it over and set it beside me.

I made no sign.

"Cheer up, monsieur," he said, "and good-night."

I did not answer.

I heard them whispering, and a muttered exclamation from the jailer, and then the door clanged, the bolt shot forwards, and I was alone. Everything so far had taken place just as I had intended.

I had learned, as I have said, that de Verney understood English, and was a man well versed in danger, and mademoiselle had told me he was a favourite with his jailer. I had therefore perfected the idea I had conceived, which was no other than to make the authorities believe

that Monsieur de Verney had struck down his servant, stripped him, donned his clothes, and so escaped, leaving his unfortunate lacquey senseless on the pallet.

My plot had failed in one respect, for if I was now to escape, my head must show some more real symptoms of a blow than the mere purplish mark I had counterfeited. I therefore drove my forehead with some violence against the wall, and was quickly satisfied I had done enough. But another thought came to me : a senseless body was as good as a dead one. I had once dressed a corpse, and I knew it was no easy matter even with another's help. It was therefore necessary I should be, as the French say, *en déshabillé*. This was a less difficult task than my last and was soon accomplished, while I hoped the jailer had not noticed anything closely ; and then I lay and waited, and pictured to myself the coach rumbling off with Madame Mabelle in total ignorance that a new lacquey sat upon the box seat, and that lacquey her husband. I trusted my mental vision was a true index to the real state of affairs, and remained in some anxiety till fully half an hour had passed, when I became convinced my scheme, or rather its first part, had met with the success it merited.

I took stock of the cell, and it was far from an uncomfortable abode, for it possessed two chairs besides the table, and while the window was heavily grated it was moderately large, so that, though the shades of evening were fast gathering, there was a fair light in the place. I contrasted it, much to its favour, with the vile dungeon I had tenanted, but all the same I trusted soon to be quit of it, for I had had enough of prisons to last me a lifetime. As I meditated in this fashion I chanced to slip my hand into the inner pocket of the coat which had been thrown hurriedly across my back by de Verney, and I found it was not empty. I drew forth its contents, and amongst a variety of trifles was a miniature of Madame Mabelle.

I had wished for no reward in this undertaking, it was but a debt of gratitude I had settled, and here was a prize which it was probable would remain in my possession, as I had purposely avoided knowing whither the fugitives were to fly. I felt myself amply repaid, for the portrait was very like madame ; but had I known what awaited me

in the future I doubt if I should have felt so confident on this point.

Two hours must have slipped away ere there was any sound to indicate the approach of a visitor, and indeed I was so wrapt in my own thoughts that the first warning I received was the key rattling in the lock. At once I turned myself over on my face, arranged the coat about my shoulders, and feigned unconsciousness, after satisfying myself that there was a goodly lump upon my temple. I fancied I might have dispensed with the paint, for the skin was broken, but I had expected to be struck by a fist and not by a stone wall.

"Monsieur," said a voice, "if it pleases you I care not if I have the drink you mentioned."

I had ever heard the French were a polite nation, I was now certain of it; but I was not certain long.

I was aware that the fellow carried a light, and presently he gave vent to a low whistle. Then I heard the sound a cork makes when it is forced from a bottle neck, and finally that which liquid makes when it is gulped. I considered that the fugitives had now got a very fair start, and as I wished to have my doubts solved I resolved to show signs of life. Moreover, it struck me it would be somewhat amusing to see how the turnkey explained how the eau de vie had vanished, and so I gave a heavy groan and moved uneasily.

I heard the bottle set down upon the floor.

"Monsieur is in low spirits," said the man.

I groaned again and turned upon my side, screwing up my face as a drunkard does when you strive to rouse him.

"Can I give monsieur some eau de vie?" said the rascal. "Ah, but I see he has had some, and it has done no good! Truly his sorrow must be great."

I could scarce keep back a grin at this wily speech, but turned still farther, giving a low moan as I did so. Next moment the light was playing on my face, and then the man gave a cry and knelt down beside me, as I could see, for I opened my eyes ever so little.

"*Mille diables!*" he muttered, "what is this?"

He very soon saw what it was, and jumping up began tearing his hair and cursing his ill fortune. From that he

took to kicking his new prisoner, which had the effect of speedily rousing me, so that I sat up, looking as dazed and stupid as possible, and pressing my hand to my wounded head. He evidently feared that he might lose me also, for he departed forthwith, taking the light with him and clearly in mortal dread of what awaited him when the escape of de Verney became known. In a short time he was back again, but now he was between two armed guards, while the way was led by a tall man in uniform, whom I took to be the governor, and several other persons crowded in behind them. I was sitting on the pallet with my head on my hands, but I looked up as they entered.

The governor was much excited, yet he made a close inspection of the cell, examining the window, ordering the flowers to be gathered up, and taking charge of everything belonging to de Verney, which did not mean much.

Then came my turn, and I was closely interrogated.

I pretended to scarce know what had happened to me, and to be suffering from a distressing headache, the result of the violent blow I had received. I gave my name as Patrick Connor, and made out that I was an Irishman who had but recently been taken into the service of Madame de Verney. I made liberal use of some of le Fanu's expressions, and when they had been at the trouble of explaining what had occurred I broke out into lamentations and cursed Madame Mabelle most heartily. The jailer was only too eager to second all I had told them as to the false message and his locking the door, for such an explanation freed him from any suspicion of complicity and convicted him only of a certain measure of carelessness.

The bottle was inspected, and the fact that some of its contents had disappeared was duly noted, and both the jailer and myself had our breaths examined. He, poor fool, had declared that I must have indulged since he left, but he could not escape the nose of the governor, who now, it was clear, strongly suspected him.

I was searched, however, on the spot, but I had concealed madame's miniature between the pallet and the wall, and was glad the former was not disturbed, though I was annoyed when some money I had transferred to de Verney's pockets

was found and taken from me. I was careful not to appear too anxious to be set at liberty, but to take it as a matter of course that I should be freed. I was therefore not a little disgusted when after a great hubbub they all retired and the door was locked upon me. I had the sense not to make an outcry, but acted the part of a dull, stupid fellow, rendered still more dense by having had his brains well shaken up. A new turnkey brought me some black bread and water, and I begged a linen rag from him and made a great show of bandaging my poor head. He was a little man with curly black hair and a huge bristling moustache, and was so quick in his movements as to remind me of mademoiselle, while he talked at such a rate that I could scarce understand him. He was cheery, however, and tapped me familiarly on the shoulder; but I did not respond to his attentions, as I was not at all sure but that he was acting a part like myself. I feared he might discover the rouge on my face, but in the dim light it apparently escaped him as it had done the others, for he presently took himself off, and I was left to my meditations, which were not of the pleasantest.

I had expected to be set at liberty that night, but the governor had decided otherwise. How long was I to be thus kept by the heels? My hair-growth would in time reveal the fact that my moustache was dyed, though I had hopes of licking off some of the stuff. I managed to get rid of the paint on my cheeks to a great extent, as pallor was quite consistent with the injury I had received, but I had to dispose of it by sucking my fingers, and so made myself sick. This, however, I considered would be further false evidence of the damage de Verney had wrought my cerebrum, or, as I prefer to put it, from careful investigations I have since made on this very point, my cerebellum. I was not disturbed further that night, but next morning there was again an inspection, the miniature was discovered but nothing else, and to my joy I was marched out of my cell. We traversed long passages, passed innumerable doors, and descended stairs worn by many feet, narrow and dark. This was not the way by which I had come, and I began to grow anxious. I had good cause to be, for at last I was thrust into a large room in which were five or six men, two

sleeping on straw, the rest engaged upon some game at a long table. The latter greeted me with loud cries, and finding my French was not anything to boast of made me turn out my pockets, and one of them, when he discovered I brought nothing, spat upon me; whereupon I promptly felled him, and this seemed to awe the rest, who were a miserable crew, like snarling dogs. I was left to myself after this and was too downhearted to eat, for it was evident I was suspected. It was but too true, I was suspected; but this was not all, for soon I was to be forgotten.

There was no release for me that day, no, nor the next, and a week passed and found me still an inmate of this large cell, which I discovered was the place reserved for suspects. I endured in silence, but when another week stole past I demanded to see the governor, and got nothing for my pains but hard words and harder blows. I protested, at times I raved and stormed, but all to no purpose. It was maddening to be thus confined and to know that all my pleadings went no farther than my jailer's ears.

"What had the governor to do with a brute of an Irishman?" I was asked. My companions in misery mocked and hooted at me, till one day I turned on them in a fury, and though the odds were great, drove them before me into a corner, and threatened to strangle them one by one. They ceased to trouble me after this episode, but I was glad when their places were gradually taken by new-comers, for I never knew when they might set upon me in the night. Men came and went, but I seemed fated to remain, and I found it worse than useless to attempt escape. It was long ere I gave up hope. I could not believe that such injustice could be done in a state prison, but little did I know the vile system which lets men rot and moulder till their hair turns white and their brains grow childish. I was enlightened by one prisoner who came to my dungeon from another cell, and who had spent twenty weary years in this terrible captivity, a living death.

"I began," he said, in a voice husky and broken, "as a suspect, and here I am again. They do not know who I am. I am merely a number, God help me, a man without a name."

He died shortly thereafter, and was glad to go, and his

last words in my hearing were, "*Numéro vingt-un, ici!*" for he thought he was answering to his Maker.

There is no need to tell of how, as the months rolled past, I grew callous and hopeless. Let me only say that I misjudged Madame de Verney, who I thought had forgotten me as others had. Long afterwards I learned that her first care had been to ask a friend to make discreet inquiries concerning me, but this friend, to save himself trouble, had replied that I had also escaped, and so madame ceased to worry, though I was ever remembered as "*le cher Écossais, Monsieur Olifan.*"

Let me say also in this place that the whole prophecy came true, for de Verney was drowned in the Garonne some ten years later, and I yet have madame's letter, tear-stained and blotted, in which she sent me the news.

But my residence in the Bastille was not to prove wholly fruitless or unprofitable. Indeed I can now look back upon it as most fortunate, for it is very true that a blessing may come in disguise. I had long become used to the daily routine, the cleaning of the cell, the quarrelling, the meal, at times fair, at times vile,—for our food depended largely on the money a new-comer might smuggle in, or on the clemency of visitors,—the dreary tramp in the courtyard, the games so-called, and the ribald jests and tales, when suddenly I became a person of importance. A prisoner fell ill of a great carbuncle on the nape of his neck, and I had the courage to make in it a crucial incision, which not only relieved him of much pain, but caused a sloughing and a resolution, so that he recovered, much to everyone's surprise. I became known as "*le chirurgien,*" and my next case was that of a turnkey who had got his finger crushed by a folding door, and who was in danger of mortification. I whipped it off in a twinkling, and luckily it healed without delay. He was exceedingly proud of the stump, and indeed I shared his feelings, but he proved a good friend, for he spread my fame, and very soon I was in a manner doctor to the whole prison. Indeed I saved the governor money and became too valuable, though this did not occur to me at the time. Even if it had I doubt if it would have made any difference, for I was content to potter from cell to cell and cage to cage, these latter

horrible places of confinement ; to dress wounds the result of torture, to set limbs broken by some ruffian's brutality or by the wheel, to close the eyes of many a sorrowful being, and yet to remain a captive, a dull, lethargic mortal, with heavy eyes and unkempt beard and hair, a sort of melancholy hermit without hope, without desire. More than two years crawled slowly past, and it was in the winter of 1718 and towards its close, when those who fell at Sheriffmuir were bleached skeletons hidden away amongst the heather, that I was one day summoned to attend a prisoner who desired my services.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RING AND THE ORDEAL

I FOLLOWED the warder through the mazes of the grim old prison, and we ascended a stair leading to the south tower, a part I had never before been called upon to visit. As I have hinted, I had grown careless as to what became of me, and got as much pleasure as I could out of my work. As I toiled upwards I hummed to myself the old Jacobite song which had comforted me in Henri Grenouille's pleasant premises long, long ago, as it now seemed to me—

“Doon wi' the drap,
For gude's the tap
And better is the toast, sir.”

I stopped, for a stranger had appeared at the top of the stairs, which the warder had already reached, and as I mounted this stranger looked at me very fixedly. I glanced carelessly at him, and noticed he was an extremely handsome man in the prime of life, with a face which reminded me of a hawk, so sharp and alert did it appear to be. He held himself very erect, and was plainly but well dressed in black. This much I saw, and then we passed each other, and I began again—

“For I'm gey sure
It can't be pair
When it is tae oor host, sir.”

The cell was but a little way farther on, and as I turned to enter it I noticed that the stranger was looking after me. Almost immediately, however, the warder threw open the door and I forgot all about the man outside.

The cell, which was small, had but one occupant, an old man in very wretched clothes, with a withered yellow skin

and white hair. His face, though marked by dissipation and the small-pox, was refined and his features good, but the stamp of death was upon him. He lay on his side upon a straw pallet, and glanced up at us as we came in with a curiously pathetic smile. I fancied I had seen the man before, but where I could not imagine. The whites of his eyes were a brilliant yellow, for the jaundice had hold upon him, and I saw that he must be much troubled with the itching, for he had been scratching the backs of his hands and left upon them purplish lines. Indeed, as he soon told me, he had sent for me to see if I could give him relief, having obtained permission to do so.

"Is the itching then so very bad?" I asked.

"Intolerable," he replied, "but nothing to the itching my fingers have to be at the throat of him who has just left me."

He spoke fiercely and then gave a sigh of utter weariness.

"But no," he continued in English, "nothing I have tried has prospered, not even revenge."

"You are no Frenchman," said I, in the same language, for the turnkey had gone away, leaving the door locked.

"No," he said, "I am not; but who are you, sir?"

"I am a prisoner like yourself," said I, "but one with privileges, as you see."

"And have I not privileges?" he asked, with a harsh laugh. "I shall soon be quit of these walls, my friend, very soon."

I did not contradict him, for it was self-evident.

"Are you a countryman of mine?" he asked, with some show of interest.

"If you are a Scot, I am."

"Nay, then, I am an Englishman, though it is long since I saw the white cliffs. However, it is good to see an islander's face in any case, though I have little reason to love the Scots I know. Think you I shall last the night?"

I placed my fingers on his pulse. It, like his voice, was fairly strong, and I saw no reason to apprehend a sudden ending, though his poisoned blood was sapping his heart's strength.

I answered him in the affirmative, and told him I would ask the turnkey to let him sponge his dry, saffron-coloured skin with vinegar and water.

"I thank you, sir," he said; "pray come and see me on the morrow, if I am still in the flesh and you can arrange it."

The jailer entered, and I nodded a farewell to the old man and left him.

I managed to obtain leave to visit him the next day, and found him visibly weaker. His voice had sunk to a whisper; the cold was mastering him. He told me that I had eased his suffering a little, and that he was very grateful.

"I am a private prisoner," he said, "and so my belongings were left me, and very precious they are." He took a bundle of papers tied together by a dirty rag from the breast of his coat when we were alone.

"This," he said, "is my history, a great history truly; one of sin and failure, my young friend. A sad picture, but my own fault in many ways. I wrote it before my last venture, which landed me here to die. It may interest you; it may be a warning. I do not know what has brought you here, but your face looks honest and you may have suffered wrongly. Take it or leave it as you please, for all that need be added now is the word *obit* and the date."

He turned his thin, anxious face away from me and was silent for a moment.

"And by the way," he said, fumbling in his clothes, "they did not find this on me, or no doubt they would not have left it with me; take it also," for I had accepted the strange gift. "In a way it is not mine to give, but it is all of value that I have," and he handed me a ring.

I took it, looked at it carelessly, and then sprang to my feet in great excitement.

It was the Cameron's ring o' luck.

At least it was the same, a massive circlet of gold with a clenched fist and dagger stamped upon its broadened part. "What is it?" he whispered feebly, "what is wrong?" Even the slight effort he had made had sorely exhausted him.

"Where did you get this?" I asked hurriedly. "Quick, sir; tell me, I beg of you."

"Got it?" said he bitterly, "I stole it along with some money from a man's pocket in the Rue Saint Denis a fortnight since, stole it to fill the cravings of my empty belly and to get me drink, so that I might forget my misery

and regain a little of the courage I once had. The money has gone ; it alone remains. But what is it to you ?”

“It is my own,” I muttered, “and was stolen from me.”

“Truly it is a pretty world,” murmured the old man.

“What was the owner like ?” I asked.

“I cannot tell ; all I know of him is that his pocket was deep, for it was in the dusk and in a crowd which was hastening to the pillory.”

“Could it be,” thought I, “that Silas Solid was in Paris ? and if so, what of Dorothy ?” The desire for liberty, long dormant, rose in me at once, but I restrained myself and secreted both the papers and the ring.

“Yes, I stole it,” said the old man. “I am a hardened sinner, but I had never stooped to theft, to be a common pickpocket, I who was born to a title ; but pain and hunger are strong enemies. Well, well, it matters little. Had I only lived to satisfy my honour, I had died happy ; but now” —he turned away from me with a weary moan.

It was strange to hear this wreck of a man, this jaundiced, fallen beggar, speak of his title and his honour. It was pitiful to see his feeble, restless fingers clawing at his tortured skin. I had seen many wretched lives pass in this gloomy place of woe ; I had witnessed the last struggles of not a few, who had begun life with high hopes and no doubt good resolves, and had slipped away, broken and wearied, in its dismal cells and dungeons ; many a story, sad and tragic, I had heard, and in a way I had become hardened to death and suffering ; but the sight of this old man who spoke my tongue, and was leaving the world with all its toils and troubles, friendless and forgotten in a foreign country, touched me. Moreover, as I have said, his face seemed familiar to me and he appeared to have something of the gentleman left ; and though men may sneer and mock, there is something in blood, something in birth and breeding which money cannot buy and experience rarely brings, though its once fortunate possessor may in the long-run find that he has driven it wholly out of himself, even though it dies hard and is often the last good quality to vanish.

I asked him if I could be of any further service, but he merely shook his head, and I am not sure but that there were tears coursing down his sunken, discoloured cheeks as

I softly stole away when the warder returned, though whether tears of repentance or of baffled desire I shall never know; for ere night came he was where there is no repenting, and where earthly hopes are vain.

It was a mighty contrast to pass from this mournful scene to where my companions were cursing and quarrelling over the dice, and making merry over two bottles of Nantes brandy and a macreuse pie, which had been smuggled in to them, through the good offices of the jailer. I was a favourite with this gang, for I was the oldest inhabitant, and was I not in favour elsewhere? They pressed me to join them, but I excused myself, as I had plenty of occupation, and I was—for there is selfishness in everyone—not a little elated. I was not superstitious, but I believed in this parting gift of my mother, that mother whom I had scarce hoped to see again. I dared not display it in this place, but I fingered it often as it lay in my pocket, in the pocket of the breeches I had worn since I came to the Bastille as a lacquey on the box seat of the great gilded coach. I was confident my luck would turn. I looked forward to deliverance from my long captivity and debasing surroundings. I was so absorbed in these reflections that I forgot the papers which had been entrusted to me. Indeed I could not have read them in this place, for here all was common property; it was the law that all must share alike. They would have been taken from me and torn to fragments in mere wantonness had I exhibited them. To be sure I could not be certain that the ring was the same, but it was identical in every respect with that which Silas Solid had stolen from me, even to a little notch in its edge. It was a miracle that it should have once more passed into my possession, but stranger things happen every day. Again I asked myself, was Doctor Solid in Paris? I had undergone many a change since the ring and I had parted company, and it might have done likewise; but that was a small matter. I did not now care if I should never again see the sly and ugly face I had hated in the days which were gone, unless indeed Dorothy was still in the man's power, which I could scarce credit; for surely she must long since have discovered he was a villain, even though he was her father. As you may suppose, I had little sleep that night. I lay and waited for something to happen, while the

snorings and gruntings of my fellow-prisoners filled the air with an unpleasant melody. Morning came at last, the dull grey light filtering in through the high-set grated window, as I had so often seen it do, and revealing the squalor and wretchedness of the room. Never since the first month I had spent as its inmate had I felt such a disgust and loathing of my surroundings. My thoughts had been away back in the steep, wind-swept, weather-beaten High Street of Auld Reekie, and by the side of the stately, flowing Tweed. I had been wondering if the pure snow capped the Pentlands and the Eildons, and had been picturing lonely Sheriffmuir buried beneath a drifting sheet of feathery white. And now I came to myself, and there, huddled amongst the straw, lay the forms of men with grimy, vicious, sin-stained faces—men, some of whom had little of humanity about them ; there was the dirty floor, the grease-spotted tables, and the empty bottles. The air was cold but scented with the fumes of rank tobacco and of eau de vie, and just then I felt half stifled by it.

I was not to experience much more of it that morning however, for scarce had I broken my fast when the turnkey appeared and beckoned to me in a mysterious manner. I had been waiting for this, but I held my hopes in check, for I remembered it might only mean another visit in my capacity as surgeon. Still, though the man said nothing, there was something in the way he looked at me, something in his deportment, which made me fancy that a fresh development was pending ; and this, taken with the return of the ring to my possession, served to raise my spirits and quicken my sluggish blood. Indeed, as I found we were approaching the gateway, my expectations rose to fever pitch, and it would have been a very bitter disappointment had our march ended in the cell of a sufferer. Instead, I was shown into a sort of waiting-room, a bare, comfortless place, which, though not a dungeon, yet had the look of one, its solitary window being grated and its door iron studded. As I entered, a man who had been standing with his back towards the latter turned round and looked at me.

It was the stranger whom I had met as I climbed the stairs the previous day.

He made a sign to the turnkey, who left us alone, and I

stood and waited, while again I noted how very handsome this man was, and observed also that shrewd appearance and alertness which had struck me even in the brief glance I had taken at him when we met before. He was certainly well set up, though no longer young, with a beautifully turned leg and tapering ankle, and had a conscious look of power and easy dignity which suited him admirably.

He favoured me with a distant bow, but I stood stock still, a rugged, hairy figure of a man, gaunt and hollow-eyed, with no manners left; and yet I was all in a tremble of eagerness, in a pitiful state of uncertainty. Perhaps he read in my face what I strove to conceal, for he gave a genial smile and seemed to graciously unbend. He stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his long, flapped waistcoat, and a quizzical look spread over his features. He leaned forward a little, balancing himself on his toes, and half shut one eye, regarding me sideways out of the other. For the moment he looked like a play-actor about to astonish his audience by a startling witticism, and the next he certainly astonished me.

"Ye hae the Scotch gey weel for an Irishman," he said.

I well-nigh jumped out of my tattered shoes.

It was the old tongue, the speech of my boyhood, spoken in a broad Edinburgh accent; and one must be a Scot to know with what feelings it is heard when it has not greeted the ear for many a long month; and one must be a Scot in a foreign country, ay, and in a dreary prison, to understand how it affected me. I thrilled all over, a curious weakness came upon me, the tears rose unbidden to my eyes, and my under-lip quivered. My hands shook as though taken with the palsy, and involuntarily I held them out in front of me, and took a step forwards.

"Ay, ay," said the stranger, "'tis easy to see you are no Patrick Connor. Come, what am I to call you?"

At once I recoiled within myself, so to speak, as a snail withdraws into his shell.

"Who are you that ask?" I queried.

"That's enough," said he; "that proves it. So, Master Canny Scot, you would answer a question with another? Well, I shall be more polite. My name is Law, John Law, and I am a fellow-countryman."

I started, for the name was known to me. A prison such as the Bastille, where men are herded together, is the place *par excellence* for gossip, and the highest in the land are discussed freely and frankly; scandal becomes a tit-bit, a sweet morsel. It is a fine thing for a prisoner to air his views on princes and duchesses, to curse nobles, to point the finger of scorn at cardinals, and to criticise the morals of a court with the points of an actress. It harms no one; it is a fine method "*pour passer le temps*," as the French say. Prisons, clubs, and ladies' boudoirs, as I am credibly informed, are the centres of such converse, and for a similar reason—they are places of idleness.

Thus I had heard of Monsieur Law or Lass, for he went by both names. He was a man who had begun to make a figure in Paris. He was hand and glove with the Regent, for both were gamblers and loose livers; many a story had been told of his conquests amongst the fair sex and at the green tables. I remembered how more than one of my companions in misery had envied his lot. He was a great banker, I knew, with strange ideas in his head; but what could such a man want with me?

Till then I had not been aware he was a Scot; now I recalled some tales of old Adam's about a certain Beau Law of Lauriston. Could he be the same?

"Are you from Lauriston, sir?" I asked.

"Softly, my good friend," said he, "softly; you forget your manners, and if you are to come with me you must make some show of gentility."

"Come with you?" I stammered, scarce believing my ears.

"Perhaps," said he, with a dry smile, "you had rather stay here."

"Heaven forbid!" I cried, "but do not trifle with me, sir; for God's sake, do not fool me!"

"Tut!" said he impatiently, "I never waste my breath, sir, and I mean what I say. You are a free man, and my coach awaits us. Have you any valuables you care to take with you? I hear a man may grow rich in this pretty place."

I was so taken aback that I clutched at the table. The suddenness of the thing unmanned me.

He seemed to enjoy my confusion.

"Come," he said, "this life is all a toss up. Had you not

been given to melody, and had I not heard you, this might never have happened; so thank the Muses or your Scotch tongue, not me. Are you ready?"

"Yes, yes," I cried; "let us begone, let us begone!" and I went for the door at a run, eager to be away, lest anything should occur to bar my exit. He followed me, laughing heartily, and I did not altogether like his laugh even then; it was cold and hard. The man had done me a service for which I felt I could never repay him, and yet there was a lack of warmth and kindness about the way he spoke and acted, a cynical callousness, a well-bred indifference to my wretchedness and anxiety, which somehow chilled me. This Monsieur Law reminded me in no small measure of my father. To be sure I did not care just at that time. It was enough to know he had liberated me in some marvellous manner, to know he was the good wizard who had unlocked the dungeon door and restored me to the company of free men and women, to fresh air and sunlight, to variety of scene and change of food, to the hundred and one things I had been pining for in the depths of my heavy heart. And yet I did not like his playful remark as we crossed the drawbridge, for he took a good look at me and smiled cheerfully.

"D'ye ken," said he, "y' are like a hoolet routed oot in the daytime frae his nest in the ivy."

It was very true, but it was far from kind.

I had come in a coach, I left in a coach; and as we rumbled away I remembered I had never thanked my benefactor.

"Sir," said I, with something of my old self struggling up within me, for it is wonderful how readily a man adapts himself to his surroundings—"sir, I am somewhat remiss in my thanks, but with the shadow of the Bastille about me I was tongue-tied; now"—

"You will hold your tongue," he said brusquely, "if you are a wise man," and he sat apparently wrapt in thought till we passed through a *porte cochère* and drew up at the courtyard door of a fine stone house, the walls whited with plaster and adorned with trailing evergreens fastened to a trellis work.

I was conducted to a room by a portly man-servant, so loftily minded that he sniffed at sight of me and kept his distance. Thereafter the whole thing reminded me of the

Hôtel Rossignol: the luxury of a bath, the making of my toilet, the getting into fine linen and a suit, scarce so gorgeous as that in which I had appeared before madame and mademoiselle, but better fitting and more to my taste. I had evidently been expected. My liberation had been the result of deliberation; it had not been accomplished in a hurry. And yet Law, as far as I could tell, had seen me for the first time a few hours before. I did not know then what money can do in Paris—I know now that it can do almost anything; and at the time of which I write the man in whose house I was now making myself presentable was on the high road to prove this. He proved it, and it proved his ruin. I think he was a little surprised when I entered the room where covers were laid for two, and where he was warming himself at a fire of logs. I believe he had taken me for some uncouth army surgeon; certainly he had not imagined I was a gentleman. He was not only surprised, he was annoyed when I made my bow and looked about me with an air of satisfaction. Clothes are strange things. The world would become queerly mixed up were they for a time prohibited by law; they serve a man better than the armour of the old knights. Truly the tailor rules the universe! Just then it struck me that I had not worn a stitch of my own garments for well-nigh three years. It seemed a ready method of opening the conversation.

“Sir,” I said, “I came in wearing one man’s habits, and now I have put on another’s.”

“So I see,” he answered shortly; but apparently he did not perceive the point of my argument.

He was silent and distraught all through the meal, while so light-hearted had I become that a very little encouragement would have set me talking briskly. The generous wine I tasted warmed and roused me, the well-cooked food tickled my palate to such a degree that I had hard work to restrain my appetite. I had never been a gourmand, but I was one that day; I lived for the moment, and enjoyed myself to the full. It was as well I made the most of it, for I was speedily to be put to the test. When we had finished my host led the way to a small room, in which was a variety of devices to secure comfort that surpassed anything I had seen in the Hôtel Rossignol. It was clear that

Monsieur Law lived in the lap of luxury. He motioned me to a chair opposite him, and on the other side of a fireplace set about with painted tiles and having a hearth of black polished stone, which contrasted markedly with the brass of the andirons and the tongs. For a time he looked dreamily at the glowing logs and the flames which flickered and fell, and now and then spurted fiercely, as they fastened upon some part to their liking. I watched him in silence, for I was becoming drowsy, and could only wonder if the fact that we were sons of the same country had occasioned this act of benevolence. I was speedily to be undeceived, and to understand why he had hoped to make his proposal to a man of rude feelings and without the finer sensibilities. He roused himself at last, and looked very fixedly at me.

"You find this better than the Bastille, monsieur?"

His was a double question.

"My name is Oliphant," said I, "and this is heaven compared to my late quarters."

"So I should think," he said drily, "and now, pray give me your attention. I had intended to let you taste more deeply of these pleasures before I came to the point with you, but I find I have been mistaken; you have experienced them before."

I did not reply, but I sat upright and waited for his next words.

"I am no meddling philanthropist," said he, "and, to use a vulgar phrase, I am accustomed to get my money's worth; therefore I wish you to do me a service, Mr. Oliphant."

Still I held my tongue, for I fancied it was no trifling thing he desired of me.

"I understand you are a surgeon of exceptional parts, cool and daring."

I bowed, though I had never so regarded myself.

"It so happens," he went on, speaking very slowly, and looking away from me at the ruddy blaze, "that a person in whom I am deeply interested is the victim of a certain complaint. It is a growth of the neck, in itself innocent, I am assured, but it presses on the gullet and almost wholly prevents the swallowing of food. You follow me, sir?"

"Yes," I replied in a low tone, for I was startled by the turn affairs had taken.

"Very good. I have the best advice in Paris on the subject, and they say that it is possible to remove this tumour, but not one of them dare do it. I can understand their timidity, for I have myself studied the anatomy of the neck and know the risks. You see I state the matter fairly."

"Go on!" I said sternly, and I think the change in my voice startled him, for he glanced at me quickly.

"There is not much more to say," he replied coldly. "They will not try; it is for you to make the attempt."

"And if I refuse?"

"You return to the Bastille."

"And if I am willing?"

"If you agree to do this thing, and if you succeed,—mark me, only if you succeed,—your fortune is made, Mr. Oliphant. I am desperate, and I cannot bear to see what I have seen these last few weeks. I had given up all hope, for I could not compel the surgeons, who are afraid of my wrath in the event of their failing."

"You cannot compel me," I said quietly.

"No," said he, "compel is scarcely the word."

A silence fell upon us, and I sat taking in the full meaning of the situation.

"You have done a very cruel thing, Monsieur Law," I said at length.

"I crave your pardon," he replied, "but remember I did not take you for a gentleman; you looked the man I wanted, and it is for you to say whether or no you are that man. I must have your answer at once, for either you sleep here or in the Bastille."

"Sir," said I, "do you take me for a fool? You spoke of me as a surgeon, and yet you ask me to operate on a case I have never seen. I shall do no such thing. Show me what has to be done, and then I will give you my answer, not before."

"And in the meanwhile you will sneak away at the first opportunity," he sneered.

"Sir," I replied, "you said I was a surgeon; in that you were wrong, for I am merely an anatomist, who has by chance become something more: but you also said I was a gentleman; in that you were right, and you have my parole."

He smiled gravely, rose, and crossed to where I was sitting. I rose also, and he held out his hand.

"I am again in the wrong," he said, "and believe me I regret this necessity; but you are nothing to me, while," he paused, "the person you shall see to-morrow is dear to me as life itself."

I merely bowed; I would not take his hand. I was determined to look upon the matter wholly in the light of a contract, though I scarce disliked the man so much as I had done, for I understood his feelings.

He bit his lip and drew himself up haughtily.

"There will come a day, Mr. Oliphant," he said, "when greater men than you will only be too eager to grasp the chance you have just refused."

"You mistake me," I answered quietly. "I prefer to consider this on a certain footing. When it is settled one way or the other, I shall be glad of your acquaintance, Mr. Law."

"Indeed?" said he, with an oath, "if you are as cool with the knife you will do, my friend," and he rang a bell and held the door open for me with mock politeness.

It may be thought that after such an interview I had little sleep, but, on the contrary, I rose fresh and fit on the morrow; for I had not lain between sheets for many a long day, nor gone to bed after such a meal as I had in the evening since I had last seen Madame Mabelle. Moreover, I resolved not to worry myself about the future, and so slept like a dormouse or a hibernating squirrel.

The next morning I was served with coffee and a slight repast in my bedroom, and on descending found the coach awaiting us. Monsieur Law, beyond remarking on the weather, did not address me in any way as we drove through street after street, and finally drew up before a house surrounded by a wall and a garden. It was small, but apparently fitted very elegantly, and I confess to a rapid pulse and a flushed cheek as we entered it, while I could see that my companion was full of anxiety despite his mask-like face. An old dame, toothless but not ill-looking, met us and led the way to the door of a room.

I followed Law within, and a woman who was lying on a couch looked up at the noise of our entry and smiled faintly. It was well for me that Law had his back to me, for I stopped short and stood staring at the girl—she was not much more—in the utmost dismay and astonishment.

It was Dorothy!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ORDEAL FINISHED, AND WHAT FOLLOWED

AT least I thought so for a moment, the next I saw I had been mistaken ; and yet the likeness was very wonderful. There was the same rich-coloured hair clustering about a smooth white brow, the same grey eyes, the same nose, mouth, and chin, and yet somehow there was a difference ; not the difference, however, that illness makes, though at a glance I saw this was, or was not to be, my patient. The girl, despite her beauty, was a mere shadow, thin and care-worn, the blue veins showing on her temples, her cheeks hollow, her frame wasted, her life plainly ebbing from her ; and no wonder, for she was dying of starvation. At once I felt a warm pity for the poor creature, and resolved that if possible I would save her. I began to grow interested in this venture, and that quite apart from what it meant to me. All the same I was ill at ease, for I could hardly get rid of the conviction that this was indeed Dorothy, sadly altered, no doubt, and yet the same lass to whom I had bidden farewell on the edge of the moor above Dunblane. Her voice, however, dispelled the illusion. It was very weak, but she seemed to brighten at sight of my companion, and I half guessed the relations in which they stood, though I scarce imagined the whole truth. I was to learn that in a sufficiently remarkable manner, and to have more interest in this girl's fate than Monsieur Law had thought.

He introduced me to her as Mademoiselle Dumaine and called her Rose, while I am bound to say he showed to better advantage than he had yet done, as he smoothed her rippling hair and fondled her wasted hand, the while he spoke caressingly and put her at her ease in my presence. Then he had the delicacy to withdraw, and I set myself to

my task. I endeavoured to be very gentle, and soon won her confidence; but I was appalled at what I found. I could not judge of the nature of the growth, that was beyond me, but I did not wonder that the surgeons shrank from the idea of removing it. True it was loose; it seemed to be contained within a capsule, and capable of being easily shelled out, as we say; but its surroundings were the danger. All have not a knowledge of anatomy, and so it is useless to be more explicit. Suffice to say that the thought of the operation which would be required made me turn cold. What is more, I did not believe the girl could endure the necessary pain and loss of blood. I shook my head.

She read my face, and the great tears coursed silently down her pale cheeks. I hesitated. Had there been nothing beyond my own fate depending on my resolve I would have returned to the Bastille, but there was a life to be saved. Again I examined the hideous thing, not hideous in itself but in its significance. I noted some points which had escaped me before. I began to entertain hopes.

But just then I would say nothing. I was a trifle rusty in my knowledge. I could not be certain as to one or two things, and so I told Law when I rejoined him, and found him in an agony of doubt and fear. The man was clearly bound up in this Mademoiselle Rose Dumaine. He understood, however, and took a crumb of comfort from my words.

The next two days I devoted to study. I had every facility. I was introduced to a private room of dissection. I paid a second visit, and finally I made up my mind.

I would do this thing.

And I did it. I had skilled assistance, instruments of the finest, all I could think of, all I asked for; but never again will I undertake such a task.

The girl's courage was beyond praise; I was a pitiable coward beside her. But somehow I managed to keep my head and work quickly and deftly, even when a slip would have meant death, a false touch destruction. The sweat rolled down my face, I could scarce breathe under the terrible suspense; but I finished, even to the dressing of the wound, and then I staggered from the room and fainted.

The ordeal had been too much for me after all I had endured since I set foot in Paris, and Rose Dumaine was out of danger, having been tended by others, when I began to take any further interest in affairs. I had become the victim of a low fever, affecting the brain amongst other parts, but it was almost worth while having been ill to feel as I did, health and strength returning to me in mighty bounds, to find my appetite was becoming something like what it was wont to be at Erkinholme, to feel cheery and see all things in a *couleur de rose*, as one might say in a double sense.

And indeed I had now cause to be in good spirits, for Law was true to his word. I had been taken to his house, and nursed and cared for as though I had been his own son. His coldness and haughtiness vanished, and I found indeed a pleasure in his acquaintance, though I could not condone his faults nor reconcile myself to his immorality. Indeed, when I found there was a Madame Law, a patient, faded, suffering woman, I thought it had been better if I had left the poor girl to pass away and be rid of her shame and dishonour. And yet who was I that I should judge? Law seemed to be able to love half a dozen women at once and all equally well, and I found he was adored by most of them, if every tale were true. It was wrong; judged by the strict code in which I had been brought up it was very vile; but I soon discovered it was the custom in this place, which was, like the cities of the plain, exceeding wicked. I could well understand the temptations which must beset a man like Law, who the very month he had rescued me to serve his own ends had been made Director General of the Company of the West, and to whom the eyes of all Paris were turning. The country was in sore distress, impoverished by war, threatened by famine, the poor ground down by taxation, the rich in fear of becoming poor; and suddenly an unknown had arisen who had boldly declared he would change all this, who in his cups had boasted of a future none had dreamed of, and already he was beginning to work a change. True he was not then what he afterwards became, the idol of France, the magician who changed all he touched to gold. I was to see this king of gamblers, this prince of adventurers, when he had climbed

to the giddy pinnacle of his glory, when he was first in the whole land, when his levees were to equal, nay, to surpass in some ways, those of "le grand Roi," when his salons were to be thronged with the proudest women in Paris, with churchmen and nobles, with statesmen and courtiers, with brokers and beggars, ay, with every class of the community, who looked upon him as the God of Mammon, and bowed down and worshipped. Yes, and I was to see him, through no fault of his own, hurled in a moment from his lofty perch, scorned and threatened, and fain to fly, disguised and ruined, from the city he had made drunken with the love of money. But all this has nothing to do with my simple tale, though this marvellous countryman of mine and his strange career would make a story more wonderful by far than my poor adventurings, curious though these latter were. As I have said, he was only then beginning to climb the ladder of fame, though already well known as an astute banker with ideas beyond his fellows.

But though a gambler, a hard drinker, and a debauchee, Law of Lauriston was a man of his word, and he stood by me. He had promised to make my fortune, and he set about doing so. Through him I had the entry to the best society, and, had I cared, to the opportunities for equalling him in a career of vice. But such was not to my taste. I got a glimpse of what passed in the court and the places of resort of the men of fashion, and it did not commend itself to me. I was more concerned with adding to my knowledge, and indeed I soon gained a position which necessitated close study and made a clear head and a steady hand imperative; but of this anon. I saw no more of Rose Dumaine, though I heard enough about her; and indeed I had no wish to look upon my handiwork, though I might well have been proud of the cure which I had been the means of accomplishing. I oft puzzled over her likeness to Dorothy, and came to look upon it as a coincidence; for, as was but natural, the real solution of the matter did not occur to me. The situation was a delicate one, and at first, when I would have felt some interest in paying her a visit, Law in no way encouraged me, and, as I have said, I soon ceased to care, having my hands full of other matters.

I learned at this time how I had been allowed to linger

on as a suspect in the gloomy prison which I could now look upon with equanimity. It appears that the Duke had found another charmer, and had forgotten about Madame Mabelle ; but as he was a man with an excellent memory, the governor never knew when he might make inquiries concerning the escape of de Verney, and so had kept me as a scapegoat for a time, and afterwards had found me of value.

Law, however, had the golden key which can unlock the door of any prison, nor did he fear Monsieur one whit, and so he had easily made arrangements for my release.

And now behold me in a modest lodging in the Rue des Marmousets, by no means a fashionable quarter, but very central, near the Hôtel Dieu, and affording me a chance of a stroll westward in the afternoons, when I was so minded. It was a diversion to take the air in the gardens of the Tuileries and watch the string of coaches in the Cour de la Reyne. I became accustomed to the simpering *petits maitres* combing their hair or their periwigs in public ; to fair madames who thought nothing of producing pocket glasses and studying their faces to see if patches and powder suited them ; to the men of the Swiss guard in their gay uniforms ; to the superb palaces ; to the sluggish, swirling river, with its bridges and its barges ; and to that crisp air and blue sky which makes one feel buoyant and light-hearted be he ever so seriously minded. I visited the coffee houses, I became acquainted with the games of chance, and learned to play at tennis very skilfully, though it is but a poor sport compared with that of the football. I grew accustomed to strange dishes garnished with the onion of Languedoc, to the grey salt, to the *pain de gonesse*, and to the taste of sorrel, which was much taken to guard against the scurvy. I frequented the play-houses and could appreciate an opera, while once I even attended a masked carnival and came near being poisoned, having been mistaken for another person.

Law had made me the present of a purse and of a hundred actions in the company which traded with the colonies in America, and I took both readily, for I considered I had fully earned them, as well as my freedom from the Bastille. The knowledge of what I had done became common property, and it was not long before I was called

upon to remove the leg of a gentleman who had been shot in a duel. I explained that I had no letters, that I was but a student and had no right of practising, but I was in a way forced to it, and had to consent. I was again fortunate, and my fame began to be spread abroad, but I refused to operate any further.

However, a way was found whereby I acted as assistant, and if needful could give a helping hand; and so I soon earned a livelihood, dressed and lived well, and was at liberty to prosecute my studies. I availed myself of every chance, at the rooms of dissection and at the hospitals, where there were often four in a bed, a practice I cannot approve, but rendered necessary by lack of space. I wrote to Erkinholme a long account of all that had befallen me and of my prospects, which letter never reached its destination, and ere I could expect a reply I was in Paris no longer. Before I tell how this came about, however, I must needs refer to how I became the instrument whereby Henri Grenouille ceased to cumber this world, and to what was discovered in his pleasant premises. I had not forgotten that place of woe, and when I found that Law meant money, and money meant power, I told him of my experience.

"I shall see to it," said he. "Indeed there have been murmurings, for bodies of folk, which had mysteriously vanished, have been exposed at the Chatelet; and had it not been that a few men who have the Duke's ear are interested in this villainy, it would have been put an end to. But trust me, I shall find a way; for the rascal has grown careless of late, and is too bold."

And sure enough a way was found, and one night armed men stole across the river, scaring the cutpurses from the Pont Neuf, and took their way silently to the little Rue Bernard. I had obtained leave to accompany them; and indeed, previous to this, I had gone down the river in a wherry and tried to discover the position of my old cell, but had failed, for the window had been filled up. Now I felt a glow of righteous joy at the thought of the destruction of this abode of cruelty and the bringing to justice of the vile man who owned it. I resolved my next task would be the finding of le Fanu if he were still in Paris

He was nearer than I thought.

We had with us a man who, like myself, had managed to escape, for the drink he consumed had begun to tell on Henri Grenouille, and he was not so vigilant as of yore. This man knew the door, which was so like the others around that it might easily have been missed, and undertook to knock upon it while we lined the walls on either side. The moment it was opened there was a rush, and the nameless prison was captured. Henri and his mutes were speedily secured, indeed, they attempted no resistance, and then the place was searched. At first it seemed to be a very ordinary house, but I bade them bring water, and on pouring it upon the passage we found it flowed through the flooring at a certain part. A sword-point touched a hidden spring and a trap-door sprang back, revealing stairs. We descended to another passage and found the cells, ay, and found something more; for in a hole which reeked of filth, where the air caught one in the throat, it was so foul, we came upon a solitary prisoner, who was a maniac. We heard his meaningless laugh as we looked through the grating, for this cell, like mine, had no door. He was prowling round and round, and when we lowered a lantern my companions saw that he was eating the dirt amongst which he walked, cramming it into a toothless mouth, round which hung shaggy red hair, coarse and matted. But I saw something more, for in this wretched, stricken man I recognised the once gay and dashing le Fanu, who had thus fallen into the very trap to which he had committed me. It was impossible to rescue him. He paid no heed to the rope we sent dangling down to him, and not one of us was bold enough to descend into the madman's cell. The captain of the guard gave a signal, and a moment later there was a rattle of musketry, and then the sound of dropping shots, while screams and yells floated upwards from the gloom below.

I sickened as I listened, and yet he was but reaping what he had sowed, and it was merciful to kill him. As the captain said, when all was over—

“That has saved us much trouble, *mes amis*, but the aim must be improved if it has to be done again.”

Fortunately there was no need; le Fanu was the solitary tenant of the nameless prison.

It may be imagined with what feelings I looked into the

river cell, now wholly darkened ; and indeed every man of us was sobered by the horror of this place, while there was some talk of at once executing Henri Grenouille and his myrmidons. They were spared for the wheel and the gallows, however, and it was from Grenouille himself I learned what I have told of his life and his villainy, and found that he had imprisoned le Fanu after I had broken loose. I have never met a more repulsive being—he was merely a brute with the power of speech ; but he shared one good quality with the brutes—he had courage, and he died game.

All this time I had kept an outlook for Silas Solid, though I scarce expected he was in Paris. The ring had indeed brought me luck, and I kept it carefully by me, but I had lost the papers of the old man who had passed away in the Bastille. They had been removed with my clothes the night of my release, and I had so little interest in them that I had not taken the trouble of inquiring what had become of them. I grew restless as the summer came round. The heat was trying, and I began to have a longing for home, for a sight of the old keep and the faces of my boyhood, for a breath of the sweet air of the south country, for a scent of the wild roses in the hedges and the wild thyme on the uplands. I wished once more to cast a fly on Tweed and take a morning dip in its still reaches. I was sick for the time being of the frivolity, the gaiety, the glitter and false show of the life of the French capital. In Edinburgh all had been dull and solemn, save for fierce bursts of rage now and then and the drunkenness which was common, but for all that there had been a sternness and solidity about it which pleased me better than the butterfly existence folk led in Paris.

Men thought, and laboured, and drank deeply in Auld Reekie ; they were heedless, idle, and vicious for the most part in this city by the Seine, though amongst them there were men of brilliant talents, plodders on the road to learning or to wealth, statesmen with a true love of country and a steadfast uprightness—as witness St. Simon,—and sturdy, honest citizens, and these alone were to keep their heads when Law's great bubble swelled and burst.

None the less I had my way to make, and I doubt if I should have obeyed the promptings of my heart had it

not been that I had to consider other interests besides my own.

One evening I was poring over my books by the open window of my room and listening to the merry sounds which rose from a crowd gathered about a juggler in front of the church of *Nôtre Dame*, when I received two visitors. The first was a servant from *Madame Law*, who had discovered the papers in my old clothes and now returned them. I was about to examine them when a rapping at the door announced the advent of the second.

With an expression of annoyance I rose and called upon the new-comer to enter, in no very gentle voice; but I remained rooted to the spot, for my summons was obeyed, and *Dorothy Wayward* stood before me. There could be no doubt of it this time.

"*Mistress Wayward!*" I stammered.

"*Allan, oh, Allan!*" was all she said, and I know now that she was shocked at the change in my appearance, having previously only seen me once in *Paris*, and that at a distance. She had become a woman since last I saw her, and the promise of her girlhood had been amply fulfilled. Her dress was very plain, almost severe, and she had none of those great hoops which sweep the side walks and are to me an eyesore. Indeed she was in a riding habit more in the fashion the Puritans once adopted, though the grey cloth was cut differently in the prevailing mode, and was relieved by some show of colour, being slashed with silk. She had a little hat of beaver, silver braided and curled at the edges, which sat most neatly on her head; but though a dainty figure, she was plainly distressed and in need of help, while she carried a small valise in one hand.

"*God bless me!*" said I, "what is the matter?"

"*You will aid me?*" she cried.

I bowed.

"*To the best of my ability,*" I answered, "but pray be seated."

"*No, no,*" she said, "he will be on my track. I have run away, and knowing you were here I ventured to come, for," she flushed a little, "you are my only friend in this place."

She said this in so charming a manner that I bowed again to hide my confusion and to let me gather my wits.

"You refer to your father?" I asked.

"Yes," she said hesitatingly, "but you must ask me no more. Only you will save me from him, will you not?"

"I will do all in my power," I answered quietly. "What is your wish?"

"I would go back to Erkinholme if I may."

"To Erkinholme!" I cried.

"Yes," said she simply, "to your mother."

"But," said I vaguely, "you cannot go alone."

"I know that," she replied, "and so I came to you for help."

Here was a dilemma, but I had given her my promise.

"It seems you had better start at once," I said, "if you are to be quit of the city ere the gates are shut," though I must confess I did not look forward with much pleasure to this undertaking. The situation was a trifle awkward for a man in my position. To be sure I had not seen Dorothy for many a long day, and she had in a way snubbed me at our last parting; but I had never got her out of my head, and though I fancied myself no longer love-sick, I found that I liked to watch her when I thought she was not looking, and, well, I was just a trifle excited by her sudden arrival. As far as I knew she was still pledged to Henry Gering, and here had I to travel a few hundred miles with her, see to her comfort, protect her if need be, and to start off upon this precious journey at a moment's notice, and leave my work and my projects to take care of themselves. Still I felt that my honour was at stake, and I had more than once expressed my willingness to serve her; and so, when I found that her valise contained all she needed, I set about making my preparations.

She watched me for a little, half amused, I thought, in spite of her alarm.

"Allan," said she suddenly, "do you know I think you have become a very strange man."

"So mademoiselle remarked," I replied, without thinking what I was saying.

"Who?" she cried, in a curious tone.

"Mademoiselle Susanne Genoure, a lady I have the pleasure of knowing," I said, without looking at her, being

indeed busy making up a saddle bag, and cursing myself for my unlucky speech.

"Oh!" said she.

There was silence for a few moments, which she was the first to break.

"May I ask what you are doing?" she said.

"I am making my preparations to accompany you," I answered.

"What!" she cried, "you will come with me yourself, and at once?"

"Did you expect anything else?" I asked.

"Well, I thought that, that"—

"Mistress Wayward," said I, "if the idea is distasteful to you say so at once, though it will not be easy in such a short time to procure a trustworthy escort such as you must have."

"But you are leaving your work. I have heard you are famous, that you are becoming rich, and"—

I bowed.

"You will permit me to consider my own affairs," I said quietly, "at present I am considering yours. It is for you to say whether I come or not."

I was annoyed at myself as I said this, for, as the deuce would have it, a ring of eagerness came into my voice.

She looked for a moment as if she was going to laugh, and then suddenly, to my intense surprise, she came running to me, holding out her hands.

"This is very kind of you, Allan," she said, "and I shall not forget it. Come, we have had our differences, but let us now be friends. We parted before half as friends, half as enemies, you remember."

I would have liked to scratch my head at this new move on her part, for I could not for the life of me make out what she would be at, but I only put my hands behind my back and bowed again, for I was resolved to do nothing unworthy of my friendship with Henry Gering.

She stood irresolute, surprised and pained, and I was sorry for her and still more sorry for myself, but I feared if I did not keep a stout barrier between us my good intentions might go to the winds.

"Oh, very well," said she, giving her head a little toss,

though there was a catch in her voice, "if you are too proud, too great a man, I have no more to say. I will accept your offer, as time presses and I do not care to be left to the mercy of strangers, but you will please remember you are my escort and nothing more."

"I am not likely to forget it," I said coldly, though I had been intending to tell her how mistaken she was. It is queer, however, that you cannot always speak what is in your mind, even when you mean to do so. Still, in this case, I regarded it as fortunate, for it made my task of keeping myself in check the easier.

"Pardon me addressing you," said I, "but do you happen to have friends in London?" for it struck me that if this proved the case it would be best to go by way of Dieppe, and shorten the sea passage.

"Yes," she answered, "I have a friend in London," and she spoke with such emphasis, and had such a sparkle in her eyes, that I guessed to whom she referred; though why, after my cautious behaviour, she should think to pain me by this reference I could not conceive. I found she did not expect to be missed till late that night, and so begged her to remain in my room while I made my arrangements.

I hurried to Law's house, and told him that I was compelled to return home, but would come back to Paris as soon as possible.

I ordered three horses, for it is well to have a spare beast, and took care to carry a heavy bag of gold and a map with me, and to be well armed. Had there been time, I would have obtained the services of a couple of trusty fellows, but I feared to delay overlong and have difficulty in leaving the city, and so it came about that Dorothy and I set out alone upon this latest venture.

CHAPTER XXVII

I READ THE PAPERS, AND COME TO GRIEF

I AM not minded to set down all the incidents of our journey, for I got little pleasure out of it, and indeed there is almost nothing to tell, save that we jogged along peaceably enough, conversing only when absolutely necessary, and remaining very polite to one another. There were many things I was eager to learn: how she and her father came to be in France, and why she had left him; what had happened after Sheriffmuir; if she knew how the folk at Erkinholme were; in what way she had learned about my presence in Paris; but I thought it better to hold my tongue, and even when once or twice she seemed inclined to forget her own resolve, I managed to maintain our relations on the footing she had wished. I could see that she was troubled that first night, and she had clearly experienced grief and anxiety before she came to me; so that I guessed she had found the task of converting Silas Solid from a villain into a loving father by no means an easy one. I only wondered she had not fled from him long since. It surprised me also to find she had not wedded Henry Gering. And, what with one thought and another, I passed the time readily enough till we reached Mantes in the early morning, having travelled fast, there being a moon. There I let her have a couple of hours' rest, for I did not fear pursuit; and it occurred to me I might do worse than examine the old man's papers, which I had brought with me.

I untied the bundle again and spread them out before me, for I had the back room of the inn to myself. But when I looked at the writing I started and leaned eagerly forwards. What was this I read? What mystery was now to be unfolded? I rubbed my eyes; again I examined the

feeble scrawl; and then I set to work to peruse it in great excitement, for the papers purported to contain the true history of Sir Oliver Wayward of Drakes, in the county of Surrey. The more I read the more amazed I became. The story was truly wonderful, but the chief wonder lay in the fact that it had fallen into my hands; for this was the life-history of Dorothy's father.

With it I have nothing to do. It was a sad, dark record of sin and suffering; but with its bearings on my position I had every concern.

I found that Silas Solid had lied again to me and lied to her. He was no more her father than I was. There was not a word about him in all the writing. A guardian was indeed mentioned, but it did not seem that this referred to the precious rascal who had come into both our lives. This guardian had some control of money which had belonged to Dorothy's mother, and had at her death been left to Dorothy and her elder sister, being lodged with a firm of writers in London, their father, the miserable man whose end I had witnessed, having previously fled the country. All this was plainly stated and sufficiently astonished me, but before I finished I was still more amazed, and I learned why the poor jaundiced wretch had come to die in the Bastille, why Law had visited him, and why he had longed to strangle Law. All this was made plain, and with it yet another puzzle was solved and I got yet another shock, for I discovered that Rose Dumaine was sister to the girl whose escort I was. John Law of Lauriston had caused her fall, and the knowledge of his daughter's shame having come to the ears of her wretched father, he had existed to gratify one desire, that of revenge upon her betrayer. There was no record to tell of how he had failed and the other triumphed, but none was needed. I thought nothing of his fate, indeed I was too astounded to think at all. In the wisdom of Providence I had come to be mixed up with mystery after mystery, till now I doubted whether I was in my right senses or not. But I could not doubt the veracity of this document, torn and dirty though it was. I recalled what my mother had said about Dorothy's secret trouble, about her mysterious guardian. I saw now that it was no wonder the girl whose life I had saved was

so like the girl who had in all probability saved mine. I did not know what I was now to do ; the problem was not a little complicated. Law was my benefactor, and there was no doubt Rose Dumaine, or rather Rose Wayward, was bound up in him. Then again, Dorothy knew nothing of all this, at least I supposed she did not ; nor was she aware that Silas Solid was not her father, but even a greater villain than I had thought.

“Heaven help me,” said I, as I heard her descending the stairs, “here is a pretty tangle,” but I merely shoved the papers back into my pocket, and assisted her to mount after we had eaten in silence. All that day I pounded along a little in her rear, wondering how on earth I was to convey this intelligence to her. Night came, and I was no nearer a solution of my difficulty. I resolved to put the matter off till the time came for us to part, and, as evening drew on, I fell to watching her as she rose and fell in the saddle, her figure outlined against a golden light in the west. I remembered how first I had seen her on the palfrey, and recalled the interview at the courtyard gate. The thought would creep into my mind that surely we were made for one another, that surely all our meetings and our partings, the strange events which had befallen both of us, were meant to show that our lines of life were to run together. As I noted the easy grace with which she rode, the pretty poise of her little head, the knot of sunny brown hair gathered up beneath her hat, I had to confess to myself that my old feelings still ruled me. It was bitter to know this, and to know that were I to speak what was in my heart I would be taking a mean advantage of the worthiest man I knew, a man upon whom my thoughts had often dwelt as the time dragged drearily in the Bastille. I have said little or nothing about all my imaginings, for they would fill many books, but I had been confirmed in my former opinions of Henry Gering, and I think all my trials had added a certain stability to my character which it had not before possessed. Let it not be thought I boast. I would merely tell the plain truth, and as I have not scrupled to set down my ill deeds, so I do not hesitate to place on record those which may perhaps be worthy of a little praise. I only know that I had a hard struggle with myself all the

way from Paris to where I came to grief, but I can say, and I am proud to say it, that I did nothing or said nothing which would have caused Henry Gering pain. I may have been a fool for *my* pains. I am certain Dorothy thought me both rude and strange in my manner. At times she gave me a glance which almost made me think there must be something of the coquette in her, a glance which, had I not been tongue-tied, would have sent me spurring alongside her. It almost seemed to me she must be playing a double game, and had she not spoken of her friend in London I think I would have asked her for news of Henry Gering; but as it was, I knew very well that she had referred to him, and I also knew that he was not the man to prove false. Besides, I asked myself, "Who but a madman would prove false to Dorothy?"

On the whole, however, she was very grave and sad, and she grew more so as we advanced, so that it was a relief to me to reach Dieppe. We arrived at the little town in the daytime, and I remember I was much pleased with its appearance, its tiny harbour, its old castle, and its white cliffs. I had noted as we travelled that the peasants and folk in the smaller towns were very different from those in Paris. They seemed thrifty, honest, and wonderfully cheery, despite their manifold troubles; and of this I am certain, that if ever France comes to be humbled, if ever she falls from her high position, it will not be the fault of those who till her soil and tend her vineyards. And here, at Dieppe, I found a pleasant people, who smelt of the salt sea and of ships, of tar and tobacco, but who were as kindly as they were weather-beaten, as ready to greet you with a smile as they were to take your money; and surely it is better to pay overmuch and be so greeted, than to pay a proper sum and be favoured with a scowl. We obtained a passage in a lugger plying to Newhaven, and here it was that Dorothy would insist upon paying her share of the expenses. I was willing to bear the whole burden, which indeed I could well afford, and which it was a pleasure for me to do; but she grew short in the temper when I argued with her, and then showed signs of tears, upon which I did not oppose her further, as you may well imagine.

I have said I did not fear pursuit, for we had slipped away so quietly and so quickly that I scarce thought it possible Doctor Solid could have got wind of our departure. But as we drew out from the coast I found I had been mistaken. Our worthy skipper, a little fellow with a bushy beard, twinkling, deep-set eyes, and a cap like that I had found on my head when I woke up in the Hôtel Rossignol, happened to take a squint through his glass towards the harbour, and he drew my attention to some horsemen who had arrived at the far end of the quay. I took a look at them out of curiosity, but I whistled to myself as I did so, for though I could not be certain, yet one of these new-comers reminded me very strongly of Silas Solid.

I said nothing to Dorothy, who had gone below, but I begged our mariner to let his craft show her best paces, as I learned from him that *l'Hirondelle* in the harbour was a speedier boat, but, as he said with a comical air and in English, being proud of his knowledge, "her capitan is von dam fat man, and who is beside me von dam fat fool."

And so it proved, for, despite a breeze which I was assured suited *l'Hirondelle* much better than *la Marie*, the latter kept her distance after the former's bowsprit came gliding out from the harbour of Dieppe. Our skipper entered with joy into the escapade. He evidently took us for a couple of lovers pursued by an irate father, and his sympathy was wholly with us. Indeed he would have gone and consoled with madame, as he called Dorothy, had his duties permitted. We had to tack up and down Channel, and our pursuer followed suit, so that, what with anxiety in watching her, I forgot to be sick. We kept our distance, it is true, but we did not gain on her, and I reflected she would no doubt gain on us when we made the harbour. The hours sped past, and at any other time I should have revelled in the strong salt breeze which fanned my face and hummed through the rigging, the ropes twanging to it like harp-strings. It was a fine sight to watch the waves part before our forefoot, and go curling and swirling along the black, shining sides of *la Marie*. There was a glorious feeling of life and vigour

in the plunge of the lugger, in her lift to the seas, in her heeling over to the blast. I had known nothing of a ship before, save the abominations of a stinking hold and the hardness of her planks; but now I understood something of the love men have for the ocean waste, the delight they feel in the heave and roll of the billows, the joy with which they sniff the sea air and plough the deep. I thought I should never tire of watching *l'Hirondelle* speeding in our wake like the bird whose name she bore, each sail bulging like the breast of some great swan, her masts tapering to tiny wands, and the streak of colour which ran along her hull glistening as the sun struck upon it. The wild gulls swooped about us, the spray flew in showers upon the foredeck, and for once I felt really free and untrammelled, till I remembered the man I had seen upon the quay, who was now beyond a doubt on board the craft to leeward of us.

By the time we sighted the English coast the day was drawing to a close, and my anxiety increased. I had no map of the road to London, I doubted whether we could obtain horses, I did not know what the distance was. We should have to ride by night and dare not stop, for I felt we should not be safe till we had reached the capital. I asked the captain if he could take us to the Thames, but he shook his head. It seemed that sailing in any other direction *l'Hirondelle* would have the better of us. He explained at length, but I was too ignorant of such matters to understand him, and besides, he said he did not like the look of the weather. I began to get into a mighty rage at Doctor Silas Solid, and I felt that dourness which I thought had been well-nigh threshed out of me creeping over me again. I resolved I would get Dorothy to London though I should die for it. Life without her did not appear very rosy, and I did not care much what happened to me, but I was going to thwart the ugly villain who seemed for ever fated to cross my path. We began to draw inshore, and Beachy Head, a great promontory, was pointed out to me away to the eastward, a mass of white cliffs, which seemed to bid defiance to the land across the Channel. As we went about before the final tack a brilliant idea occurred to me. I asked the

captain if it were possible to be put ashore in the ship's boat.

"*Certainement*, monsieur," was the answer; "de sea is quiet inshore."

"Look you," said I, "if this is done, could you thereafter arrange a collision?"

He repeated the word after me, in doubt as to its meaning.

I drove one hand into the other, pointed to the deck of *la Marie* and then to *P'Hirondelle*.

"Ah!" said he quickly, "vat you call a bump, eh?"

"A bump be it," said I, "and the harder you bump the better shall I be pleased. Will fifty louis d'or make it worth your while?"

"Monsieur," said he, "for madame's sake all alone vill I bump *la Marie*."

He pressed one hand upon the pit of his stomach, no doubt mistaking it for the region of the heart, and favoured me with a ludicrous bow. "Truly," thought I, "there is something after all in the politeness of the French," but I scarce deemed of finding it here. We went below, and I had even to reason him out of his folly, for he seemed to have been stricken with Dorothy's charms, and also to be a man who loved a rough jest.

"You must needs bring it about in rough water," said I, "so that they will not venture to lower a boat."

"You trust me, monsieur," he said, as I counted him out the money. "Their boat is amidsheeps, and ve vill there bump, so!" He thumped his horny little fist on the locker, and his eyes twinkled with merriment. "And it all vill be how you call it—ah, by chance, an accident. I tell you Pierre is von dam fat fool."

He overwhelmed me with thanks, though what I had paid him seemed to me a small enough sum for which to imperil his life, the life of his crew, and the boat, which he had told me he owned. However, I reflected he knew his own business best, and he apparently had no fear of the result.

He certainly managed his little craft as though she had been a living thing, running her up into the wind till he had stopped her way, when Dorothy and I descended into

a tiny boat, rowed by a boy with very black hair and very red cheeks.

Our skipper bade us farewell with many a bow and grimace, and sighed as Dorothy, watching the lift of the boat, sprang aboard her as easily and lightly as a sailor could have done.

A few minutes later I set foot for the first time on English soil. We were a little to the east of the village, which had a tiny harbour at the mouth of a stream, and round which the country looked flat and desolate, save to the north and east, where lie the chalk hills which they call the Downs.

At first there did not seem a horse to be had for love or money, but at last for a great sum I managed to obtain a huge, raw-boned sorrel, with a square head, box-like barrel, and long, loosely-hung legs, which spread out into hoofs of a prodigious size. His tail was a grey stump with a bristle of hairs at the end of it, and he had the eye of an idiot and a stride like the dromedary, of which I have made mention. For all his faults he looked powerful, and I was thankful to conclude the bargain, which was well-nigh interrupted owing to the excitement caused by the fact that the two luggers had come into collision. Sure enough, there was *la Marie* about a mile off shore, with her nose jammed into *l'Hirondelle*, and, as far as I could see, everything in a pretty mess, both vessels drifting down Channel and swinging this way and that.

It must have been very skilfully managed, for I gathered from the talk of some old tarpaulins that the big lugger was to blame, and not that in which we had crossed.

I had no time, however, to stay and see how matters went, and so I hurriedly explained the affair to Dorothy, and told her there was but the one horse.

"I fear," said I hesitatingly, "that for a time we must ride together."

"I am not afraid," she answered, and with a smile patted the great brute, who swung round his nose to her and pricked his ears.

"You may not be afraid," thought I, "but the Lord knows that I am," for whether I should pass honourably

through this ordeal I knew not, with the lass perched upon my saddle bow and her neck an inch from my nose.

It did not strike me till we started, followed by a cheer from the little crowd, who clearly had fallen into the same error as our worthy skipper—I say it did not strike me that she might have ridden behind and held on to my sword-belt. It is true we might have changed, but for this once I was weak.

Soon I would see no more of her, for I could not travel to Erkinholme now, at least not with her, and I could not stay there if she made it her abode; so in a moment of recklessness I let her ride in front of me. The position seemed to amuse her; she had apparently recovered her spirits in large measure, and I am certain that once or twice she was shaking with laughter and not with the jolting of Boanerges, for by this amazing name I understood our amazing steed was called. And indeed the beast himself would have made anyone laugh. The plunges of *la Marie* were nothing to his; he had a roll and a bucket in his method of progression, and I cannot tell what besides. In a short time I was choking with laughter myself, for we both swayed backwards and forwards, pitched this way and that, and had the brute's back not been as broad as a door, Dorothy would have gone to earth. But there was almost room for another on this monstrous horse, and he assuredly could travel. The way had been pointed out to me, and he sped along, stones and dust flying from behind him, his long, lean neck outstretched like a wild duck's, and his nostrils working like the valves of a pump. We passed few folk on the road, and those we did come upon straightway got out of our path and stood staring at us, with mouths agape and round eyes of astonishment. Soon it grew dark, and I had to moderate our pace, though it was by no means easy to control the mouth of Boanerges, which felt like wood, so hard was it.

No doubt it was somewhat amusing, but I was not sorry when we came to a village nestling among trees, where I managed to get another horse, though my foreign money caused some trouble. I had meant to ride Boanerges

thereafter, but Dorothy, who had suddenly become very meek, begged me to make him over to her.

I pointed out that he would prove too strong for her, but she said quietly—

“There are other ways of managing a horse than by force, Mr. Oliphant, and I love this great beast.”

She stroked his neck, and Boanerges made an attempt at a whinny, but it was the most curious sound I had ever heard come from a beast's throat. After this I did not gainsay her, and we pushed on rapidly. I considered we were safe, but two things upset my calculations. We lost our way and our pursuers had taken their horses with them on board the lugger, and so had found no difficulty in following us once they landed. Thus, to make a long story short, after a weary ride, with but few stoppages on our part, they sighted us some way to the south of a village called Chiselhurst, amongst pleasant rolling country, well wooded, and in a way recalling Tweedside to me, there being firs and larch trees. They saw us as they topped a rise, and I counted three of them. Our beasts were weary, and it was yet a long way to the city; still we urged them on, Dorothy now once more alarmed. I soon saw it was hopeless for both of us to escape by speed alone, and I made my plans. I reined up alongside my companion, and bade her halt. She at once obeyed me.

“Now,” said I, “tell me who are those men with Doctor Solid?”

“They are the two who were with him in Edinburgh.”

“Ah!” said I, “so they escaped. Very good. We must change horses, Mistress Wayward; my beast is the fresher. You must push forward alone.”

“But what will you do?” she asked.

“I have an idea I can master them,” I replied shortly, “but you must do as I say.”

She made no further protest, and I was soon mounted on the great horse, from whom the steam was rising in clouds, and down whose flanks the sweat poured in dark lines.

“You must take these,” I went on hurriedly, and thrust the papers into her hand, and with them most of the money I carried, though there was not much left, and amongst it,

though I knew it not, the ring o' luck. "They are very important, and," it was no time to weigh words, "Mr. Gering will see matters are set right. I cannot explain further; and now you must away."

She had listened to me, clearly much surprised, and now she clutched my sleeve with her gloved hand.

"You will be killed!" she cried; "you must not do this thing for me."

"Dorothy," I said hoarsely, shaking off her hold, "I shall never make you another request in all likelihood, so for God's sake obey me now. These papers must be saved, and it is for you to save them. Now go, and God bless you."

With that I turned, rode slowly up the slope we had just descended, and took post on the top of the little hill, which had a steep farther side.

I glanced back once and only once. Her face was all tears, and she was looking back at me; but as I waved my hand, she put her beast to the gallop and I was left alone. From her speed I guessed she had some idea of bringing me help, but I knew that long before aid could arrive the coming combat would be over one way or the other. I was in a bitter rage at the villain who had caused all this trouble, and I resolved to make him and his followers repent the hour they had left Paris, though I could not but admire his cunning and tenacity.

I drew a pistol from my belt, looked to the priming, and loosened my sword in its sheath.

It was my first experience of an affair of this nature, but I took to it readily. I had another pistol, and so hoped to do some damage ere it came to close grips. They were hidden by a belt of wood, but I could hear them clattering on the road. I was patting and soothing Boanerges as they swept into view, for he was a trifle restless. They set up a shout as they saw me posted at the top of the brae, and then they came at me with a rush. I had not been mistaken at Dieppe. The man who led them was Doctor Silas Solid.

I leaned forward and took a long and steady aim, pointing my weapon low. As I did so I was certain that my steed knew what was coming. He stood steady as a rock,

but I could feel his frame quiver beneath me, despite the heaving of his sides.

Crack! to my joy the beast which Silas Solid bestrode stumbled heavily, and then went crashing down upon his head. But the moment I fired my great horse sprang forward. He must have been a charger in his youth, and the joy of battle had come upon him also. He gathered his huge, clumsy legs beneath him, gave a snort of defiance, and then, like a whirlwind, we thundered down the slope. It was impossible to check him; he had the bit between his teeth, and I let him go, whipping out my sword and clutching at the saddle flaps with my knees.

I saw the two mounted men wheel in terror to either side, and then one of them fired. Boanerges gave a scream of pain, staggered and plunged wildly forwards, no longer galloping, but hurtling along in a drunken stride, for his end had come.

Crash! we drove full into one of the riders, and over and over we both rolled, while I cut and slashed, and saw nothing but a vision of sprawling hoofs and kicking legs as I fell. I reached the ground, coming down upon my hands and knees, and I felt something snap at my left wrist. I sprang up, and as I did so was struck a heavy blow upon the head. Lights danced before my eyes, I heard a wild outcry and hoarse yells, and I fancy I stood and drove hither and thither with my sword, but I know nothing for certain. I have never learned what happened thereafter, or what mischief I wrought, for after swaying to and fro, and seeing nought but a red haze, I remember feeling deadly sick and a blackness stealing over me, and after that I was as good as a dead man till I found myself where I had no wish to be.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CONFESSION OF SILAS SOLID

MY tale is drawing to a close, but I thought it was my life which was doing so, when I opened my eyes and found I was shut up in a small room that was absolutely bare, and had a narrow slit high up in one wall, which served as a window. I felt sore and bruised all over, and one of my arms thrilled with pain, as I came to understand that both were bound behind me and made an effort to free myself. I was fastened to a hook set in the masonry, and was lying on boards with my shoulders propped up against the stones. The roof was dome-shaped and built of bricks, without lath or plaster. I came to the conclusion I was again in prison. I had no difficulty in recalling the incidents of the fight, and every time I moved in the least I was reminded of them in a way far from pleasant. It was apparent to me that once more Silas Solid had got the better of me, though I could not conceive where now I was. I was very thirsty, but there was nothing to drink. My position was a torture to me; I was aching in every limb, I was certain one of my bones was broken, and I could have wished that I had not survived the combat. I had experienced the tender mercies of le Fanu, and now it looked as if I was to have a taste of those of Doctor Solid. They were likely to prove worse, if that were possible.

I wondered how Dorothy had fared. It seemed probable she had escaped, as I had shot one horse and the other could scarce have been fit for much after the way Boanerges had plunged into him. The third rider had likely had enough to do to master me, as Silas Solid, I fancied, had been stunned by his fall, and surely some of my cuts and slashes must have taken effect upon the man I had charged. Although so bad myself, I spared a regret for the old horse

who had borne me so gallantly, though it was probably due to him I was now in durance vile. I had learned from long experience that, when in prison, it is best to live for the moment, and so, as thinking pained me, I relapsed into a sort of dull, drowsy state, roused now and then by the grating of the bone ends in my wrist or the cramping of a bruised muscle. I cannot tell how long I thus lay. I fell asleep at last, and when I again awakened found that, though stiffer than before, I felt upon the whole better, my head was clearer, and my arm scarce pained me so much. I had now a lively sense of thirst, but the place was as it had been before, very clean, but absolutely bare. It in no way looked like a cell, and I came to the conclusion this must be some private spot of his own to which Doctor Solid had conveyed me. Suddenly I heard a barking and yelping of dogs, and then a curious chattering, but these sounds died away. Soon my constrained position became almost unbearable, and yet, did I move ever so little, my swollen wrist twinged so terribly that I was fain to lie still. I became aware that I had lost the skin from my knees, that my clothes were torn and here and there crusted with the oozing from my open bruises. I took to thinking about the past and the prospects I had thrown away. I had almost been too ready to accompany Dorothy. My haste had been unseemly. I feared I had shown how much I cared for her, and yet surely I had been circumspect, unless, perhaps, at the very end; but then I had turned to face what might have proved speedy death, and at such a time the deeper fibres in a man's nature are apt to be stirred, and his inmost thoughts and imaginings may escape him unawares. I quickly grew so tortured that I resolved to cry out. It might bring me help, it might only bring Silas Solid, but I wished to know the worst, and I could not contain myself longer. I gave vent to a shout, which was half a groan, and immediately the barking and chattering I had heard was renewed. The sounds, though faint, did not seem far away, and they puzzled me. I imagined I must be in some outhouse surrounded by a yard. Again I cried out, and again the noises followed. And then I heard that which reminded me of the night I and the three great lads had stolen across the old kirkyard amongst the tombs, for

the wailing snarl of a cat, ending in a hiss and sputter, reached my ears. It seemed that the animals must be on the other side of the wall from me, but after a time their chorus did not respond to my outcry, and as nothing came of it all, I again remained quiet.

An hour or two must have passed when once more the creatures gave tongue, and then I heard a key pushed softly into the lock of the door. I looked towards it, my heart beating fast, for there was a mysterious air about this place and its animals which in a measure scared me.

The door opened inwards, and a face peered round the edge. It was the face which had so often done the same in the room of dissection, the unwholesome, yellow visage which I dreaded, and the sneer sat upon it as of yore. There was not much light, and in the gloom it looked as if a fiend was gazing at me. I trembled, for the countenance of Silas Solid was now more evil than it had been. I could no longer doubt that he was mad. The rest of him followed his face within, and he had on the faded velvet coat and the grey breeches he had worn before. He had a cloth tied round his forehead, and from beneath it his pale eyes fixed me with a restless, shifting gaze. They had a glitter in them which I had not previously seen, and which told of a disordered brain, yet to the ordinary observer he might appear sane enough.

"So," said he, in his harsh voice, "again we meet, and after a lengthy period." He spoke, accompanied by the whining of dogs and the chattering I had heard before, but he paid no heed to these sounds. I did not answer. Indeed I was now thoroughly afraid, and I remembered old Adam's tale of the idiot in the house of Queensberry. And yet he spoke sensibly enough. If he were mad, it was a curious form of madness which had taken possession of him. I was soon to know what that form was. Doctor Silas Solid was a monomaniac.

"I told you before," he continued, "that you were a fool to meddle with me, and now I have to tell you something more."

He moved softly away but speedily reappeared, carrying a tall stool with three legs, upon which he perched himself opposite me.

"For God's sake," I moaned, "give me water!"

"You shall have water when I have finished," he said, "both food and water. It is necessary for my purpose that you should live, yes, and live well."

He finished with a chuckle, which sent a shudder through me.

"I am about to give you information," said he, "to prove to you that you have hampered the designs of a man you think a villain, but who is nothing of the kind; to show you that you deserve all that has befallen you, and all that is about to happen to you."

I stared at him fascinated. He spoke quietly, but he seemed like an evil spirit as he sat hunched upon the stool-top, with his strong, curling chin resting on the palm of one hand, and his pig-like eyes fixed on my face.

"You may save yourself the trouble of lying again to me," I said wearily; "I know the whole story of Sir Oliver Wayward."

"So?" said he, "but again you are too forward. I am about to tell you the story of myself. It is no crime to change your name.

"Many years ago I was in attendance upon a woman who died of fever and whose husband had deserted her. If what you say is true you know whom I mean. She had two children, who were to be put under charge of a guardian till both were of a certain age. A goodly sum was placed in other hands to be doled out by him, and there was a clause in the will whereby, if that guardian should die, another was to be appointed. I was the other.

"The woman died, as I have said. Had she been living and sick of the same complaint a few years hence, she would not have done so. I would have cured her."

There was a ring of triumph in his voice and his face twitched a little, but he never moved. I forgot my pain and thirst in listening to him. It was clear I was to have this last mystery solved.

"The guardian died also after a time, and his office fell upon me. I had no interest in it. I was a poor man, and I had my work to do. What monies I once had I had spent long since in study abroad. The years passed, and one of these children went to the devil; she had her father's

blood in her and it came out in her. She does not concern us."

"She made all the difference to me," I thought, but said nothing.

"The other, at her own wish and without my knowledge, was removed from London. I was ill at the time; I did not care. I was long bedridden, and when I recovered I was a beggar. But I was an honest man. I still received the money for her maintenance, and I paid over every farthing of it, though I well-nigh starved. The rebellion broke forth, and I saw a speedy means out of my difficulties. I had once served the Government; I would serve it again. I became the paid agent of the Cabinet."

"A spy," I sneered.

"A spy be it," he answered quietly; "yet a spy may be honest, and all is fair in war.

"But," he continued, and now for the first time he began to show signs of excitement, "I conceived an idea which had nothing to do with kings or kingdoms, which was of more importance than any rebellion, which would give me a power greater than armies and mightier than that of any monarch."

He got off his stool and began to stride up and down. His face lit up and his voice trembled. He reminded me of the day when he had tricked me and raved to me, as I had thought.

"What say you when I tell you that I can conquer disease by disease, that I can make the blood obey me and yield to me virtues of which none have dreamed? True, I have not yet proved it, but it shall be done. I shall win a name greater than Harvey's, a heritage such as has fallen to the lot of no man."¹

He waved his hands abroad, he sputtered in his speech, and I saw that his brain had been turned by this strange delusion. Suddenly he controlled himself by an effort, and again sat down facing me.

"I cannot prove it without money, and money would have been mine but for you, curse you! While I have to wait some other may forestall me. My God, if such a thing should be!"

¹ Is it possible that Doctor Solid had obtained a clue to the "serum" treatment of disease?—Ed.

He clenched his hands and then tore the bandage from his head and cast it on the ground.

"I failed in my mission, for you robbed me of the ring. I would I had killed you that night I scared you from your senses."

"What!" I cried in a low voice, "you were the dead face?"

"Even so," he sneered. "I had meant it but as a disguise, and in case I fell into the hands of the enemy; and lo! you must meddle with my affairs again. Had it not been for that cursed lunatic, whom I caught at last, I would have made an end of you then; but the stars fought for you, I think, and so I failed."

I saw he meant Pittendreigh, but my head was in a whirl with all I had heard. His tale was as strange as himself, but it was the tale of a madman.

"I got the girl to fool you. It was easy; I knew all her story, and none knew me. If you had ever tasted the joys of laying a cunning trap, of pitting your brains against another's, you would have known the pleasure I took in drawing you into my web. I was the spider and you the fly. You tricked me once, and when again I had you firm you escaped me. Thereafter you passed out of my life.

"Thanks to you, I got no reward. Knowing this would be so I kept the girl. She was nearing the age when the money should be hers. I treated her with kindness. I resolved to wed her."

"You!" I cried.

"Even me," he sneered. "But hear me out, my friend. I could not rest. Some other might get before me. I was given another chance, and sent first to Rome to watch the Chevalier, and then to Paris to keep an eye on things there. The girl, who is no fool, like you, suspected me, but she was helpless in a foreign country. Had I known you were in Paris she would never have set foot within it. One cannot know everything. She escaped me and fled to you. Despite the warnings you had received you again resolved to cross swords with me, and here you are! The girl matters not. I have money at last, but it is not due to you, nor did I know it was mine till I set foot in England. When I think of what you might have ruined, what you might have brought

to nought, I tremble. You are fated to thwart me, it seems, but I shall take care you shall never do so again, for I shall use you in my experiments; and believe me, you will be highly honoured.

"And now," said he, "I have shown you that I do good instead of evil, that I would save life and not destroy it."

Again he got upon his feet and paced the floor.

"What matter," he cried, "though one or two perish if the whole race may be saved, if disease may not only be cured but prevented? and yet," he struck himself upon the forehead, "and yet I may die before I make my great discovery, before I perfect my idea, and if so you are to blame, yes, you!"

He came creeping nearer and nearer me, with an evil glow on his face and his fingers bent like birds' claws. I shrank away, speechless with terror. The man had kept his madness in check as he told his tale, but now it had burst loose and he was like a wild beast.

"Curse you!" he screamed suddenly, and darted in on the top of me, worrying at my throat and snarling with rage. I was bound and helpless, and he forced me down, while I endured an agony of fear and pain. The animals, whose presence I now understood, burst into a medley of sounds. I pitched my head this way and that, I shouted and kicked, and then, with the horror of the thing, my senses left me.

When again I came to myself it was night. The place was wrapped in darkness and was still. Had it not been for my physical suffering I might have believed all I had undergone was a vision, a hideous nightmare; but it was only too surely borne in upon me that it had all been true, and that I was in the power of a maniac. It was no wonder Silas Solid and his doings had been a puzzle to me. Who could have conceived such a man? I knew, however, that a brain might be disordered upon one point only, and keen and active in all besides. There is very little between sense and madness; the dividing line is but poorly defined. There is not one of us who may not totter on the brink of the precipice of insanity. A slight tap upon the head, a sudden sorrow, an unexpected loss may push us over, and we become little better than the brutes that perish. When first I had met him this Doctor Solid must have been

swaying on the edge. He had now taken the final plunge. It was hard to understand his position, to appreciate his responsibility for the wrong he had done. I dreaded him now as much, nay, more than ever, but I could not wholly hate him. He had been stricken by the finger of God, and it was not for me to judge him. I did not hesitate to believe what he had told me. It tallied with all I knew; it explained everything. He was not aware that I had met Rose Wayward, and he had spoken of her truly enough. If one part of his strange narration were true why not the rest? I did not trouble myself to reason about it; after all, it did not matter much. I was apparently doomed at last. From what he had said, I gathered that Dorothy had escaped. It comforted me somewhat to know my last act had been to save her, that I had been spent in her service. And yet it was hard to die in this fashion. Far better would it have been if the pistol bullet which lodged in Boanerges had crashed through my head instead. I was to be used in his experiments, Doctor Solid had said. They were experiments on the blood; they had to do with disease. I had no conception of what he meant, to what weird attempts at science his wrecked brain had prompted him. The very vagueness of what was in store for me added to its horror. I had undergone much, I had suffered more than most men, but surely this surpassed anything which had yet befallen me!

To be a kind of plaything to a madman, to be at the mercy of his knife, to yield my frame and tissues so that he might use them and torture them in the wild pursuit of a delusion!

"God help me!" I sobbed, and then I raised my head and stared wildly about me in the darkness, wondering if *my* reason also had deserted its throne, for, as if in answer to my prayer, there came from somewhere above me a voice, speaking in good broad Scotch.

It was the voice of Pittendreigh the Godless.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE TREE WHICH BORE STRANGE FRUIT

THERE could be no mistaking his burr, even though it was only a loud whisper that reached me. The words also were typical of him, for they were just what he might have used when he came to look me up at Mistress Soorock's.

"Hoo are ye the nicht?" was what the voice said.

And yet at first I could not believe my ears. It seemed impossible that old Adam should have found me out. Many a curious experience had fallen to my lot which might have taught me faith, but this thing appeared to me absurd. How could a man I had not seen for well nigh three years thus suddenly turn up and greet me when I was hidden away in some secret hole in the power of a maniac? A man, too, who the last time I had heard of him had been on his way to prison on a charge of treason; a man who had passed the allotted span of life, and whom I had never hoped to meet again.

But once more his voice greeted me, this time calling me by name.

"Adam!" I cried softly.

"So ye're there, are ye?" came the whisper, and I concluded he was outside the slit in the wall.

"Yes," I answered; "for God's sake, help me, and quickly!"

"Hoots, mon, but we'll help ye for your ain sake. Are ye free?"

"I'm fast to the wall, and my arm is broken."

"The deil ye are! Weel, it's nae use throwin' ye a pick-lock or a pistol, and I maun find anither way o' gettin' ye oot; but keep your mind easy, lad."

"Where are you?" I asked.

"I'm somewhere in mid-air on a quarry face," said he, 'hingin' on by a rope and wi' my mug at a slit in the wa'. It's no jist the place for conversation, so I'll awa', and ye'll be the same afore lang."

"Adam!" I called again, for I had much to ask him, but there was no answer; he had gone as silently as he had come.

But he had left behind him a different man. I had as much trust in Pittendreigh as he had in himself, and that is saying a good deal. Hope dawned within me again. I forgot my weariness and pain and thirst; I only longed for the hour to come when I should be free. And yet I knew it would be no easy task to bring about my deliverance. Silas Solid was cunning as Satan and watchful as a guard dog. It was not likely he would yield up his prize readily, and there could be no reasoning with a madman. Still my faith in old Adam was such that I had no doubt as to his success, only I prayed he would act speedily, ere my captor took it into his head to begin his work upon me.

I was undisturbed that night, and next morning Doctor Solid came in without a trace of insanity about him, and poured water down my throat and fed me himself. It made me feel like an infant to be so treated, but I was only too glad of it, and I knew that I might have need of strength ere I got quit of him. He said nothing to me and I did not speak to him, only I shuddered a little when he was close to me and at the sound of the creatures who were his captives like myself. He was very plainly suffering from his fall, his head being again bandaged, and no doubt to this I owed my safety so far. The hours dragged on and the light began to grow faint again. I had waited eagerly all day for the sound of old Adam's voice at the window slit, and I began to feel depressed when there was no sign of him. I had not slept hitherto and I was growing drowsy, for my arm was easier, when from the room next me came a noise which was not that of the beasts; it was the cry of a surprised man. Next moment I heard the bolt shoot back, and then there was a crash, a wild shouting, mingled with the barking of dogs, and Silas Solid came rolling over and over into the room, grappling with an old woman who held a pistol

in one hand. She was grasping it by the muzzle and endeavouring to use the butt upon his skull. I stared at them astounded, but at once it flashed upon me that old Adam had fooled Doctor Solid, clever though the latter was at disguises and trickery. Had there been any doubt it would have been solved by a glance at the hand which held the pistol.

It lacked some fingers and was the hand of Pittendreigh.

Silas Solid, however, had gripped him by the wrist, and the old man was hampered by his clothes, so that there is no saying how this struggle would have ended had it not been left to me to finish it.

What with the rush and the roll they came close to me and I saw my chance. My legs were not bound, and as Doctor Solid's head came within reach I drove my heavy boot into it with all my force, never heeding the agony my arm gave me as I did so. At once he relaxed his hold, kicked and jerked once or twice, and then lay still. In a moment Pittendreigh was on his feet. He snatched a knife which Solid yet gripped in one of his hands, and without a word cut through the ropes that bound me.

"Quick, now," said he, "for your life! there are horses without," and he helped me to rise. I leaned heavily upon him and staggered to the door. We passed through, and he closed and locked it, taking the key with him.

"He may sink or swim now," said he, "and our hands are free of his blood."

I found myself in another room, round the walls of which there were set upon the floor cages with dogs and cats and apes, who clamoured as we passed them. A table had been upset along with some curious piece of mechanism, and we trod on broken glass and fine tubes of brasswork. There were other strange things in the place, but I had no time to look at them, for old Adam hurried me away and up a stair. We passed through an open trap-door, along the passage of a house, and out into the open. We were in the country.

"Can ye run, d'ye think?" asked Pittendreigh.

"I will try," I answered, and together we set off along the edge of a thick coppice in which the house stood.

"The quarry," said he, "is at the back," and I saw the kind of place in which I had been imprisoned, but had no

time to think of it just then. We rounded a corner, where a man stood upon a path holding three horses by the bridle.

The man was Henry Gering.

I began to see how I had been rescued, for Dorothy had in her possession my ring o' luck. There was no time for words, however, and I was hoisted into a saddle and soon was off at a hand gallop between the other two, though I had hard work to keep my seat.

We had put four miles between us and the house ere we drew rein, and it was well we met no one, for such a sight as old Adam in his woman's dress on horseback I never saw. He seemed at once to put any idea of danger out of his head, for as he rode he would break out into expressions of intense disgust or of amusement.

"By my marrow bones," he would say, "the deil tak' petticoats," or again, "What think ye, Allan; is there no ower muckle o' my leg showing even for an auld wife?" or, "I fear I am scarce decent, boys."

I was in no mood for merriment, but I gave way at last when he stripped off his hood and bodice and rode in his skirt alone, with his own clothes showing as far as his waist, and his stockinged legs ending in buckled shoes visible from the knees downwards.

To me he did not look a day older than when I had last seen him; his eyes were as roguish as ever, his tongue as sharp.

But now I was more taken up with the presence of Henry Gering. We had exchanged a handclasp, nothing more, but as I looked at him I saw he had become an old man before his time. His shoulders were more bent, his face was more lined, his hair was touched with grey. He rode awkwardly, but he seemed at last to have become accustomed to a horse. He did not speak, but there was a pleased expression on his good-natured face, and now and then he gave me a little friendly nod. At last we reached what I took to be a main road, and there we halted.

"Whew!" said old Adam, sliding to the ground, "may I be hung if I masquerade in this fashion again. Mr. Gering, you had best dismount, and we will help Allan out o' the saddle; he's in a bad way, poor lad!"

They did so, and then to my surprise Pittendreigh produced a fine falbala periwig from one saddle bag, a very neat hat from the other, and a glass from his coat tails, and got him into full male attire, evidently in the greatest glee at the success of his exploit.

"What think you, Mr. Gering?" said he; "that was well managed."

"Truly it was, Sir Adam."

"Sir Adam!" I cried.

"And very much at your service, Allan," said Pittendreigh, with a bow.

"God—bless—me!" I said slowly, and then pitched forward on my face.

I woke up in a house in London, which was owned by Henry Gering and where I soon regained my strength, though to this day my wrist feels the treatment it received, or rather, the lack of treatment. It was Henry Gering who tended me, and who told me he would scarce have known me, so changed was I. From him also I heard that Dorothy had escaped and had put them on my track, for she remembered Silas Solid, in one of his mad fits, speak of the place in which he lived near London. It seems it was built on the edge of an old stone quarry, one side of which had formed the outer wall of my cell, which, of course, was below the ground level. Old Adam had found that Doctor Solid since his return had taken to buying animals from the folk around, and so had got himself up as an aged woman, taking care to drop his burr for the nonce, and carried a basket with a cat in it on more than one occasion to the house, but had failed to discover where I was imprisoned. I would I had space or time to set down the manner in which he told of his beguiling and catching cats, but I must on. Failing in this way he had inspected the quarry, and from its farther side had made out the opening which served as a window to the two underground rooms. He had then, with Henry Gering's help, for they had met before, lowered himself by a rope with a loop at the end of it for his foot, and swinging on it, had managed to catch the edge of the slit and steady himself at it for a moment. Henry Gering was full of wonder at his activity and strength, and truly

it was a deed not every young man would have cared to attempt.

Having found where I was Adam had again got into his disguise, and after bargaining with Silas Solid had followed him down the stair, slipped past him, and finding the key in the lock, had turned it ere Solid could grapple with him.

But when I spoke of Dorothy my old tutor's face grew sad, and he answered me shortly to the effect he had complied with her wishes and that she had gone north to Edinburgh by coach, in the charge of a gentleman of his acquaintance, upon whom he could rely to see her safely into my father's keeping. Thus I found my father still lived, and that my mother was also hearty and well, but that she had sorrowed for me as one long dead.

I saw he did not care to dwell on the subject before me, and understood his feelings, for he was ever careful not to give pain, and so I forbore to question him further. He was, I discovered, secretary to some great man, and though he lived simply, had ample means, so that I wondered he had not pressed Dorothy to stay and wed him. But the thing that caused me most amazement was old Adam's history. I found he had known all the time that I and another were following him the night he had stolen to the camp of the Brigadier, and that after giving his warning he had crept back and found Silas Solid rifling my pockets. They had come to blows and he had been worsted, though, as he took care to explain, not till his adversary got help from a troop of horse carrying despatches south. He had managed to send a laddie they had passed on the road to my help, and finally had been taken to Dalkeith, whence he had penned his precious note to Callender, by permission of the officer in charge but under the eye of Silas Solid.

"And," said he, for I had told him my tale by this time, "after a' the trouble I took, ye couldna see through the plot."

"What mean ye?" I asked.

"Tut," said he, "I took guid care tae put no less than three verra fine alliterations in the letter, sae as tae mak' ye think. There were three in the letter, which meant that yon rogue had thrc sides tae his character: he was the anatomist, the assassin, and the man wha stunned ye."

"Preserve me," said I, "who on earth could have understood such an allusion?"

"I will admit," he answered, "that maybe it was jist a wee bit obscure, but had it been me I wad hae seen through it."

"Hang me if you would," I cried, "for I am certain you put in four of your precious alliterations."

"No," said he coolly, "did I though? Weel, weel, ye see what it is tae be ower fond o' a certain style. It's a lesson tae ye, Allan; though, my certes, ye should hae learned sense by this time."

He had been carried to Newgate and confined with a host of other Jacobites, most of whom escaped. He had no such good fortune, however, and languished on for two years, till he came to the conclusion he had been forgotten as I had been in the Bastille. Thereupon, being weary of life, he had hit upon a plan of getting himself quickly brought to trial and punished. But let him tell his own story.

"Ye ken," said he, "I was fair worn oot wi' vile air and viler food, while the wine, when we got it, was waur than auld Jamie's cask-washings. By the way, he's keepin' hale and hearty, and the pills hae been daein' gey weel o' late.

"Ye see I happened tae ken something o' German. I hae dabbled whiles at maist things, as ye ken, and I thocht I nicht turn it tae guid account; sae what did I dae but write a letter tae yon thick-skulled carlie they ca' the King. I did naethin' but mak' a fule o' him and his precious women, wha are the maist awfu' scarecrows and auld bogles ye iver clapt een on. I got it delivered a' richt, and then waited tae get ma heid lopped off. But wad ye believe it, my German was sae bad, an' the king siccan a fule, and sae pleased tae see ony o' his dirty tongue at a', that he took the hale thing for a compliment,—a compliment, Allan,—and afore I kent whaur I was had me oot and knighted me. And as ye see it was a new experience, and as I maun dee sune in ony case, I jist held ma peace; and sae behold me, Sir Adam Pittendreigh o' that ilk, and the deil kens whaur that is."

Such was his tale, though he told it at greater length, and I was sore in the sides ere he was done. I am bound

to say I heard other versions of it, but I am minded to dispense with them, for if old Adam's was the most unlikely it was also the most diverting. At anyrate, he had gained his heart's desire, while, "anything for a jest," as he was wont to say himself.

And now I have digressed at sufficient length to make all plain, and with a prayer for pardon will take up my narrative, though there is little more to tell. It is true I might write as to what I saw of London and its life, so different from either of the two cities I had known, of the great men who were pointed out to me, men who have written their names in history and have mostly passed away. As old Adam said—

"This London is a wonderfu' place, Allan, but it's the men wha live in it that mak' its fame; while, if ye ask me, it was God made Auld Reekie famous, and His handiwork is aye the best."

I found Pittendreigh made some figure at the clubs and coffee houses, where he was looked upon as having "a bee in his bonnet," and between him and Henry Gering I saw a good deal of the great city the time I sojourned there, and I heard and saw nothing of my enemy.

Howbeit others have written and written well of London and its life in those days, and it had nought to do with the finishing of this part of my history, though the road which leads northwards from it had, in very truth, for it witnessed my last struggle with Silas Solid. I found that old Adam was wearying for the High Street, the "White Horse," and his accustomed haunts, and I also longed to return to my own land, and see my own folk, ere I went back to Paris.

It came about, then, that well mounted and well armed, my wrist being fairly sound and my bruises healed, we set out; for Pittendreigh was as fit for a long ride as a short one, and for a good deal more, as I have shown and hope still to show. Henry Gering, with whom I had renewed my friendship and in whose company I took great pleasure, decided to see us some length upon our way, and it struck me he had something upon his mind which he wished to tell me.

And so it proved, but it was of a different nature from what I had expected. Late in the afternoon he contrived

that we should fall behind, and after riding beside me in silence for a time, he suddenly started speaking quickly and without his usual hesitation.

"Allan," said he, "I have learned much since we last parted, and here and now I tender you my thanks for what you have done, though you did it in error."

I stared at him, for I could not understand what he meant.

"In error?" I queried.

"Yes," said he, "it is a matter I scarce like to speak about, but I must do so, and I thank God we are both men of honour and can speak as friends."

His voice trembled a little, and he looked anxiously at me.

"For weal or woe," said I, and reached out my hand to him.

"You are going home," he said, "you will see Dorothy—I should say Mistress Wayward," he added, correcting himself.

I began to discern his meaning: he wished me to take her some message.

I merely nodded.

"You must not wreck her life, Allan," he said gravely.

"What!" I cried.

"I understand," he said, "that you treated her as a stranger on your road from Paris."

"I had my reasons," I answered, "and believe me they were good."

"No," said he, "my friend, they were not. I know what you thought or still think, but, Allan, Dorothy is free. Hear me out," he continued. "When she came to me it was not long ere I read her secret. She no longer cared for me; you had won her heart."

I gave a cry of surprise, but he went on in level tones, though his voice was very sad.

"She hid it from me, for she is a woman whom one might well be proud to win, Allan. I say she hid it from me, but I asked her, for I saw the change in her feelings. She would say nothing at first, but in the end her reserve gave way, and she told me all. She had liked me, she owned it, but she had never loved me. Indeed she had

pitied me, thinking you in the wrong the day we quarrelled, and so had been carried away by her mere sentiments. She was only a girl and did not know her mind. I do not wonder at it, lad. I have been reading of a curious bird they call the secretary bird, which is very solemn and has a long beak and long legs."

He gave a little nervous laugh. "I think I am like it," he said. "It is a good name for me, and one does not expect Dorothy to mate with such a bird. You have my blessing, Allan, but I must see your face no more. I am an old man now, and my time here will be short at the best."

He turned his head away and was silent.

I had listened to him with increasing astonishment and a tumult in my breast. I had noticed he was low-spirited and had lost much of that cheery kindness which had been his chief feature. He had indeed been kind but very sad. I saw now he was heart-broken. But I saw much more. Dorothy's curious manner to me was explained. I had been blind, but perchance it was well I had been so, for I had kept my honour. And yet the news brought me no pleasure. I felt guilty of a crime when I looked at the stricken man who rode beside me. I reflected that even after he had learned that I was preferred before him he had not hesitated to come to my aid, and now he had done his best to make the way easy for me, to smooth my difficulties, to help me to win the lass we both loved. A lump rose in my throat and well-nigh choked me.

"Master Gering, Master Gering!" was all I said, calling him by the old name, in a voice I scarce knew for my own; but he did not answer, and at that moment we saw Adam, who had climbed the hill in front, beckoning to us as though to make us hurry. We quickened our pace and were soon beside him. We had loitered the latter part of the road, but we were now some twenty miles from the city, in a lonely, bare country, full of little hills and tiny streams.

When we mounted the slope we found that Pittendreigh had brought a spyglass with him, and was looking through it at a knot of horsemen who appeared far back upon the road. His face was troubled, and as he lowered the glass he scratched his chin and looked all round him.

"I like not the look of those gentry," he said.

"Are they highwaymen?" asked Henry Gering.

"They are rogues, anyhow," answered Adam. "I fear your auld enemy is on our track, Allan. He maun hae escaped."

"Silas Solid?"

"The same rascal, yes," he said, taking another look through the glass, "and half a dozen of his kidney. There is a method in his madness, my lad. Do we ride or fight?"

"They are too many for us, I fear," said Henry Gering, "but my sword is at your service."

"I thank you, sir," said Adam, offering him snuff, and then, tapping on the box lid, he continued, "Ye'll hae no peace till yonder villain is quit o' this world, Allan."

"Then let us fight," said I, for I was eager for anything which might distract my thoughts, and he was keen for a bicker.

"Capital!" he cried, rubbing his palms together, "and now for an ambuscade. There is a hill in front they will think we have gone over, and yon wood below us is just the place in which to hide. As they pass we will out upon them and take them in flank. Then ho! for the yellow-faced rogue and his crew. What say ye, gentlemen?"

We assented to his plan, and he agreed to give the signal, and soon we were concealed by the trees which grew level with the road. We went just far enough back amongst them to have room to gather way for the charge, and we muffled our horses' muzzles lest they should neigh and so betray us.

It seemed a long time ere we heard the noise of their approach, and my thoughts were busy with other matters, but at last the sound of horse hoofs and then of voices reached us, and we awaited the first whistle and prepared to slip off the mufflings. It came, and next moment the troop were abreast of us. We freed our horses and fired our pistols, but without effect.

"Charge!" yelled old Adam, rising in his stirrups, and the three of us rode at them furiously. We had taken them unawares, and two went down with the shock while some turned to fly. But when they saw they were seven and we only three, they took heart of grace and came at us fiercely, Silas Solid, who was well-mounted, leading, and making at

me with murder in his eyes. In a trice we were all mixed up, their pistols were cracking, and I saw Henry Gering's horse shot under him, but was too busy to go to his aid. As for old Adam, I heard him shouting and cheering like a man possessed, while I fought silently, hampered by my wrist, but cutting one heavy fellow down and slashing another across his sword arm. I was beginning to grow warm and to press towards Doctor Solid, who had become separated from me, when my horse came down with a crash, and I had just time to spring clear of him ere the madman was upon me. He cut downwards, and had he struck me must have split me to the chin, for I was not on my guard; but as his weapon swept towards me Henry Gering sprang between us, pushing me backwards, and driving his sword into Solid's leg and through it and saddle flaps into his horse. I gave a cry and strove to save my old tutor, but I was too late. Horse and man came down together, but so did the sword, catching Henry Gering at the root of the neck and shearing into him so that he fell a dead man at my feet. The sight roused me to a fury, and I would have thrust my weapon into Solid's body, he being pinned to his horse, had not one of his men ridden at me. I sprang at him, and though he wounded me slightly I dragged him from his saddle and finished him as I did so.

I looked about me for a moment. Three of them were no more, but alas! there were now but two of us. It was a case of two to one, and I was dismounted, while three of them were yet in the saddle, two pressing Pittendreigh, who had been forced back to the roadside. Solid had freed himself and was upon his feet, and he and the other horseman came at me one on either side. I deemed it hopeless, and prepared to do as much damage as I could ere I got my death-stroke, when there came a shout from the wood, and, for I was facing it, I saw three men burst from the cover at a run, three men above the ordinary stature, three huge men, breathing hard, whom I knew at once, and would have known anywhere.

They were my three great lads of the Potterrow.

The horsemen saw them also and made off in haste, with old Adam after them, for, as he told me afterwards, "The duty of cavalry is to pursue a flying foe," and so he chased

them for a mile, and they had experienced so much of him that they had no desire to turn on him, for, as he also told me, besides the man he had slain he had wounded two of the other villains.

Meanwhile I had seen to Henry Gering and found him past my aid. He had given his life for me, that life which had been blighted. I shall say no more concerning him. Such sorrow is sacred ; but he will never be forgotten by two persons in this world as long as life remains to them.

To say the advent of the Campbells had astonished me is to say little. I was amazed at their timely appearance, but I soon found how they had come upon the scene. Kenneth told me they formed part of the bodyguard of the Duke of Argyll, who was then in London, and was proud of having three such men about him. They had known I was in the city, but had not been able to make up their minds to visit me, thinking I might consider it out of place ; and indeed they expected I would send for them. Thus, when they learned I had left, they were much put about and resolved to follow, and late in the day had stolen away and were upon the road after me when they heard Solid's troop of horse approaching. They had concealed themselves, seen him ride past, and recognised him. Scenting danger, they had followed at the run across country, and now their only regret was that they had come too late to have a hand in the killing, and had only to capture Silas Solid, which they speedily did without my help.

And thus, when Pittendreigh returned, he found the madman bound and guarded by Donald Dhu and Malcolm More.

"Ha !" said old Adam, "you have the arch-villain ? It is well. I saw him strike poor Gering down. Well, he will not be long after him, and he shall die like a dog. Yonder is a handy tree, lads," and he pointed to a solitary pine which stood upon a knoll near the side of the road opposite the wood.

"He seems to have gathered the worst rogues in London for this business. Saw ye ever such mugs ?" he said to me. "But, thank the Lord, half of them are gathered to their fathers. We shall shovel them out of sight as soon as he is hung. There is a rope at one of the saddle peaks which will serve," and as he spoke he put one of the wounded horses out of its agony. I turned away, for at his words the

wretched man, who had brought this upon himself, began to pour out a string of wild entreaties, praying not for himself but for his work, while his yellow face was ghastly and he tore at his pale hair.

"You have ruined my toil and labour," he screamed, "but I can start again if you will only spare me. Listen, you fools! think what you are doing. If you hang me you have a heavy sin upon your souls. You are robbing the world of a mighty truth, you are putting the cure of disease back for two hundred years."

He foamed at the mouth, he babbled wildly as they put the rope about his neck.

"You know I speak the truth," he shouted to me. "Curse you! will you see me die and you a"—

I hid my face, but had he not killed Henry Gering? Suddenly his voice ceased. I looked up.

He was swinging in mid-air.

I have thought of telling how I returned to Paris, and how when Law fell I brought Rose Wayward home to die; how as the long years came and went Dorothy came to me at last; and of that friendship I formed with the now famous Monro, he concerning whom we framed a verse in the anatomy rooms at Edinburgh—

"His name must be always in all men's brains
Whether they like it or no,
For they cannot erase with the greatest of pains
The Foramen of Monro."

But I have resolved to make an end, and indeed, when I come to look over what I have written, I doubt whether I should have written it at all, for there come to my mind the last words spoken as we rode away from the spot which I must ever remember as the place of Silas Solid, though God alone knows what his place really is.

We turned in our saddles and gazed behind us at the pine tree, where, between earth and heaven, a picking for crow and raven, hung all that was mortal of the strange man who had done me such bitter wrong.

I looked and then faced northward with a shudder, while, "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, or, let the shoemaker stick to his last," quoth Adam Pittendreigh with a chuckle.



Cecil W. Quiggell 93

HE WAS WINGING IT, M'D AIR

CHAPTER XXX

AN AFTERTHOUGHT

I HAD laid aside my pen, but again I take it up, for perchance, after all, it is fitting that I should tell of what befell one day at Erkinholme, and I shall tell it shortly.

I had been home before, when I returned north after the fight upon the road, and had been received by my father as coolly as if I had never been away, while my mother wept and laughed for an hour. I had said nothing to Dorothy, however. The shadow of Henry Gering lay between us, and she had been bitterly grieved at the news I brought. I had stayed but a little time, and gone back to my work and life in France.

As I have said, the great financier had fallen at last. His Mississippi bubble had burst.

He had poured wealth into the country of his adoption, he had renounced his faith, he had become the most powerful man in Europe for a brief space, only to be ruined at the end. And from that ruin I had snatched the girl who had trusted him too well, and she had passed away in peace in her own land.

It was a glorious day in June when Sir Adam and I rode southwards from the Bristo Port. He had inspected me ere starting, for he knew my mission, and had declared himself satisfied.

My riding coat, with a many-flapped cape and velvet collar, too heavy a dress for the day, took his fancy mightily, as did my riding boots of French leather, and my manner of tying my wig. Indeed the latter fashion tickled him so much that he at once adopted it; for though old age at last had begun to creep upon him, and we took

two days to our journey, he was as lively as of yore and as merry as a cricket.

Indeed, as Jamie Callender oft said—

“The auld deil is a fair wunner; gin he lives lang eneuch he’ll mak’ Methuselah sing sma’.”

Which, it seems to me, was a very safe prophecy.

He kept rallying me and jesting with me all the way, and giving me advice as to how I should approach Dorothy, citing me a score of similar ventures of his own, till I reminded him not one of them had come to anything.

“Ye rascal,” he cried, “ye great humbug! and wha was it spoiled twa o’ the maist promising?”

“Come, come, Sir Adam,” I laughed, “the man that swithers is lost, ye ken.”

“Weel,” said he drily, “see you are no that man.”

The old place looked the same as when I had left it, even to the smoke curling upwards from the chimney of my father’s secret room, and Mat Kerr hobbled out to take the horses.

Pittendreigh had seen him before, but the meeting between these two old cronies was always a sight for sore eyes, and I stood and smiled as they took snuff and cracked their jokes, which ever began with these words, so dear to a Scot’s heart, “D’ye mind?”

I slipped away and entered the living-room, which was empty, my father and mother having gone upon a visit to a neighbour’s, and my brother David being at one of the farms, while the children were up to some mischief or other no doubt.

I did not know where Dorothy was, and it struck me it might be best to write what I had to say.

I sat down and was busy at my task, biting the end of my quill, for of all tasks this is the hardest, when she entered all of a sudden by the garden window, carrying a great bunch of red and white roses, whose fragrance filled the room, while her sun-hat swung from her arm and her face was flushed with the heat.

She did not notice me, and gave a start as I rose and greeted her. “Allan!” she cried, and then, recovering herself, “It is a warm day, Mr. Oliphant.”

“And why not a warm day, *Allan*?” I asked.

She looked down and said nothing.

A thought struck me, a way to open the siege.

"Do you know, Dorothy," said I, "it is a strange thing that usually after meeting you I have been kidnapped; you remember it was so at the house in the Grassmarket, after Sheriffmuir, and on our road to London."

"Indeed," said she, "it seems so. Are you not afraid, then, of being kidnapped again?"

I smiled, for she was playing into my hands, and all at once she blushed rosy red.

"That," said I gallantly, "depends upon the kidnapper. But surely it is now my turn to play that part. Think you I shall be successful, Dorothy?"

She stood with her head a little to one side, plucking at the flowers she carried, so that the soft, curling petals fell in showers upon the floor.

Then suddenly she looked up at me very demurely, with a little smile hovering on her lips, and a look in her great grey eyes I am not likely to forget.

"You can but try," she said.

Is there any need to say my venture was successful and that the ring o' luck had done its duty? I trow not, for it was very plain she was a willing captive, as old Adam quickly found out, and in this manner.

Some half-hour thereafter we became aware of a great to-do coming from the kitchen.

"Dorothy," I said, "I fancy it is worth while to make out the cause of all this. Come along!"

Together we reached the kitchen door, which stood wide open, and there we saw a ludicrous sight.

Sir Adam was upon the table, keeping time with old Mat's broadsword to a ditty they were both roaring forth, a merry tune, which never graced a conventicle, and which they had never learned when serving for the Covenant.

Old Mat was beating an accompaniment with an empty bottle upon the table, while Pittendreich at times found it needful to steady himself by digging the point of his weapon into the wood.

Suddenly the old sinner caught sight of us, laughing at them both from the doorway.

At once he straightened himself, with a comical twinkle in his eye, and set his wig straight upon his head.

“By my marrow bones,” he cried, “it seems to me oor auld freend Mat’s got ower muckle. Rouse up, ye roystering rogue,” he shouted, giving him a sounding whack upon the back. “There’s an alliteration for ye, and here’s a toast.”

Good reader, can you guess it?

THE END

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